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## Stores and Services in Bridgewater, 1900-1910

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**Bridgewater, Massachusetts  
A Town in Transition**

**Stores and Services in Bridgewater  
1900-1910  
(With some Historical Background)**

**Benjamin A. Spence  
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## An Explanation

For several years I have had the pleasure of delving into the history of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, concentrating on the first quarter of the twentieth century and providing, when appropriate, some historical background to make my discussions clearer. Although my research and writing are ongoing, I have decided to make available drafts of a number of topics which I have explored at length, with the hope that the material presented will prove helpful to many readers. I would request that credit be given if my findings are used by other writers or those making oral presentations.

As my study has proceeded, many people have been helpful and, hopefully, I will be able to thank all of them during the course of my writing. At this point, let me mention just a few who have been especially supportive. Many thanks to the Trustees of Bridgewater's Public Library for allowing me free access to the sources in the town's library, made easier by the aid given to me by the research librarians under the competent direction of Mary O'Connell. Without the constant aid of Dr. Steven G. Young, I would have been at a loss many times in how to proceed in the use of the computer, a piece of technology indispensable to my writing. Many thanks to Sylvia B. Larson who has been willing to spend numerous hours using her fine editing skills and her probing historical mind to improve greatly these drafts, all the while sharing my great interest in the history of Bridgewater. Any errors in these pieces, of course, are solely mine. What a great joy it is to share many of my findings with S. Mabell Bates, who, as a friend, head of the special collection at Bridgewater State College Library, and member of the Bridgewater Historical Commission, has provided me with valuable historical material and has been a constant source of inspiration. Lastly, my research, particularly concerning the Bridgewater Normal School, would have been far less interesting without my many conversations with David K. Wilson, long associated with public relations and institutional research at Bridgewater State College. His willingness to share his historical knowledge of the college, videotape my tours of Bridgewater's School Street and Central Square, begin the time-consuming task of placing some of my writings on a web-site, and put the drafts, such as this one on the churches in Bridgewater, into more permanent forms are much appreciated.

One final note concerning bibliography needs to be made. At some juncture, I will present an essay on the sources used in my study. For now, the numerous footnotes will give the reader a good idea of the research materials used in this historical account of the Town of Bridgewater.

## Stores in Bridgewater-1900

In the twenty-first century, it is difficult to imagine how busy the center of Bridgewater, especially Central Square, was in 1900. Most people in the village and the outlying districts did their shopping and used services in establishments located around the Common or on those sections of Main, Summer, and Broad Streets not too far from the Square. Adding to the hustle and bustle and the noise of the area surrounding the Common were the many trolleys carrying people to and from Brockton, Taunton, Middleboro, and East Bridgewater. Admittedly, the “electrics” system, created in 1897-8, made it easier to shop in Brockton and Taunton, as did the railroad for those who enjoyed shopping in the big city, Boston. Still, before the widespread use of the automobile, most people in town, whether by walking, riding the trolley, or hitching up a horse and cart, frequented the village center to buy groceries, clothes, or fabric to make them, farming needs, and hardware goods, among other things. Others went to indulge themselves at an ice cream parlor or a confectionery store, visit a barber shop, buy insurance, do a financial transaction at the town’s only bank, the Bridgewater Savings, pay taxes at the Town Hall (at Odd Fellows block beginning in 1902), or have a hat made by one of the town’s milliners. Since six of Bridgewater’s eight churches were located more or less in the town’s center, even Sundays had their busy moments, albeit without some of the din of weekdays. Perhaps some folk would have enjoyed a pint or two at a local saloon, but, alas, Bridgewater had long been bereft of saloons and, in 1891, had joined surrounding communities in voting against the issuance of liquor licenses to commercial establishments.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the reason for coming to Central Square in 1900, many visits included a stop at the post office to pick up letters and packages since Rural Free Delivery had not quite made its advent in Bridgewater. The town’s post office, with its limited receipts, had not yet earned the right to use carriers for mail deliveries. The commercial enterprises did not lament this since the need to visit the post office, which occupied the first floor of the Savings Bank Building beginning in 1890, increased the number of shoppers in the town’s center. Space won’t allow for a discussion of all the stores or services in the Bridgewater of 1900, but a look at some of the more prominent ones should illustrate the importance of

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<sup>1</sup> Bridgewater Independent, March 14, 1891; this local newspaper, which was first published in 1876-77 and was indispensable to my research, will be cited hereafter as BI; see my essay on Bridgewater churches between 1900 and 1910.

local enterprises in satisfying the various needs of the shopping public.<sup>2</sup>

Located on the northwest corner of Central Square, Hooper & Co., one of the most popular commercial establishments in town, was known as “Old Reliable,” owing to the variety and quality of its merchandise, which included groceries, grains, and agricultural implements. The site of this concern had long been associated with mercantile activity. During the American Revolution, Col. Josiah Edson operated a small store at this location, until, remaining a Loyalist, he fled the town under the protection of British troops. Isaac and Nathan Lazell took over the enterprise in 1779, erecting a “new” building in 1798. During the Lazells’ time, the store became associated with the Bridgewater Iron Works, a firm they had helped establish. Over the years, this retail enterprise, considered to be the first general or “country” store in town, was enlarged (many of the beams, which were “hewn, not sawed,” remained part of the structure into the twentieth century) and was run by different proprietors. In 1874, Avery F. Hooper and Paul O. Clark, who had been conducting a similar business in North Middleboro, took over this store, although the building continued to be owned by the Bridgewater Iron Co. As trade expanded, it was decided in 1876 that Clark would run “the dry goods and kindred line” part of the business in the Masonic block, where a similar enterprise had previously been conducted. Interestingly enough, in April of 1887, Clark purchased from the trustees of Bridgewater Iron Co. the building on the corner of Central Square and Main Street, where his partner Hooper was still conducting his part of the business in the “Old Store.” Almost two years after this transfer of ownership, the Clark-Hooper partnership was dissolved. Clark continued to operate his dry goods store in the Masonic building until April of 1891, at which time he sold his business to D. L. Bodfish. Remaining at his corner location, Hooper and his two sons Albert H. and A. Frank formed Hooper & Co. Albert had worked with his father almost from the beginning of the Hooper-Clark proprietorship, and, as we shall see later, took over the enterprise as the elder Hooper’s health began to decline.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “Twenty Years Ago,” *BI*, July 15, 1910; it might be well at the beginning of this discussion to point out that the distinction between retail and service enterprises was not always clear-cut since some establishments both sold goods and offered a particular service to the public; I have extensive material on the history of Bridgewater’s post office and plan to write a separate essay on this topic.

<sup>3</sup> *BI*, April 1, 1879, April, 18, Sept. 19, 1885, April 9, 16, 23, 1887, July 14, Dec. 1888, March 16, 23, April 6, Nov. 23, 1889, April 11, 18, May 2, 23, 1891, April 6, 1895, April 4, 1896, Jan. 21, 1898, Jan. 20, 1899, Oct 11, 1907, Jan. 26, Feb. 2, 1917, Nov. 8, 1918, Feb. 22, 1924; Joshua E. Crane, “History of Bridgewater,” *Hurd’s History of Plymouth County* (Philadelphia: The J. W. Lewis & Co., 1884), pp. 796, 818; I sometimes used a reprint of Crane’s history done by The Bridgewater Historical Collectors, 1986, ed. by James William Buckley and Katherine Pratt Jordan; Crane writes in his history that the “first store” was moved to the old Shaw place,” a house built in the 1740’s

By 1900, it would have been difficult to imagine Bridgewater without Hooper & Co. The firm was well-known, enjoying a flourishing trade with patrons in Bridgewater and surrounding towns, and, by the 1890's, employing about ten workers and operating five teams to deliver orders. According to an 1899 account: "The premises occupied are very large and include two floors and basement which are literally packed with a diversified assortment of goods, including flour, grain, groceries, provisions, agriculture implements, fruits, confectionery, and in fact everything one would expect to find in an establishment of the kind." This description might also have noted that a covering above the sidewalk in front of the store provided a shelter for the men who were "in the habit of congregating in its shadows, both day and evening. Women shoppers found it convenient to shop at Hooper's and then use an inner connection to reach A. I. Simmons, Bridgewater's leading meat market; the proprietor of this firm owned his own store and, by this time, the one occupied by Hooper's. In a nostalgic vein, Flora Townsend Little, one of Bridgewater's important civic leaders for much of the twentieth century, remembered in her unpublished memoirs, "Wreath of Memories," Hooper's penny candles, cracker barrels, and coffee grinder, all typical of the general stores of the late nineteenth century. Even those shoppers who did not patronize Hooper and Co. were familiar with the variety of its goods since this firm had long realized "the benefit to be derived from extensive advertising...." By the turn of the century, its front-page ads in the Bridgewater Independent sometimes occupied more space than those of any other retail business in the town. These ads also reveal, however, the beginnings of a change in the nature of Hooper's enterprise. While we might still apply the word emporium to Hooper & Co. at this juncture, it would appear that quality and up-to date groceries, including a variety canned soups and fish, were becoming more central to the business.<sup>4</sup>

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for Reverend John Shaw, the second minister of The First Parish; this dwelling at the juncture of Park Avenue and Summer and Plymouth Streets was torn down in the early 1900's; "Hooper, Avery Fobes, 1837-1912--Merchant," History Highlights: Bridgewater Massachusetts: Commemorative Journal, ed. by Katherine M. Doherty (Taunton, Massachusetts: Published for the Bicentennial Commission by William S. Sullwold Publishing, 1976), p. 266; this source will hereafter be cited as HH; David R. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater (Charleston, S. C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), p. 62; the description for the top picture was written, in part, by Benjamin A. Spence; "Hooper & Co.," The Bridgewater Book Illustrated (Taunton, Massachusetts: William S. Sullwold Publishing, Inc. 1985); published by the Old Bridgewater Historical Society in 1985, this work includes material from the two original books published in 1899 and 1908 and some additional information and pictures that take us to around 1916; for most of the future citations of this source it will not be possible to give pages, and they will be cited as Bridgewater Book; not to get ahead of our story, it might be noted, nevertheless, that Clark was not the last retailer to operate a dry goods business in the Masonic block; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903, L. J. Richards & Co., 1903.

<sup>4</sup> BI, Feb. 1, 1879, Jan. 7, 1893, Dec. 21, 1895, March 9, 1900, March 13, 1914, Jan. 26, Feb. 2, 1917, Feb. 22, 1924; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Flora T. Little, "A Wreath of Memories," unpublished work, copies of which can

More or less on the corner of Broad and Summer Streets, across the way from Hooper's and where the old Washburn blacksmith had stood, was Crane & Burrill, Bridgewater's second oldest store. It too was a general country store with a long past. Built by Edward Mitchell in the very early nineteenth century, with a second floor being added in 1825, it was run by a number of proprietors before it came under the sole control of Joshua E. Crane in 1848. Four years earlier, Crane had come from the nearby town of Berkley to help his maternal uncle, Morton Eddy, operate the business. It was an auspicious time to be conducting a general store in a town which was experiencing an economic boom, as evidenced by the building of a new town hall, 1843, the arrival of the railroad, 1846, and the increased activity of the iron industry. Crane and his patrons most likely joined other Bridgewater citizens in taking note of the propitious statistics of industry published in 1856, the year in which the two-hundredth anniversary of the old Bridgewater was celebrated. Two years later, many in the town approved the moving of the old store six feet to the east, widening Summer Street and making its connection to Main Street more direct. As the nation went through the heart-wrenching Civil War, the perplexing reconstruction period, the opening of the last great western frontier, and the rise of industry, Crane faithfully ran his retail enterprise for forty years. He became a beloved and active citizen, merchant, and historian of his adopted town. Certainly some of Bridgewater's older men enjoyed meeting there to discuss local and national affairs, even if some "outsiders," perhaps a bit derisively, labeled these gatherings the "Spitter" Union."<sup>5</sup>

After Crane's death in 1888, his son Henry L. ran the enterprise in partnership with Henry T. Burrill, who had previously served as a clerk in Hooper's. With an increase in trade necessitating more space, Crane and Burrill expanded in late 1891 and "built in the corner on Broad Street, bringing their building in line with the sidewalk." At the same time, the firm "put in two large show windows, one facing the square and the other on Broad Street...." While continuing to carry such items as dry goods,

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be found in the Bridgewater Public Library; Pictorial History: Bridgewater, Massachusetts (Printed by Dorr's Print Shop, Bridgewater-- Harry B. Harding and Sons Printers, Whitman, 1987), pp. 8, 19; Ruth Hooper Bishop, James "Mike" Bois, James W. Buckley, Martha Dorr Cossaboom, Katherine Pratt Jordan, Arthur C. Lord, Dorothy Lord Mann, and James K. Moore were the Historical Collectors who prepared this book, along with three other publications; Pictorial History: Bridgewater, Massachusetts (Rockland, Massachusetts: Fairmount Printing, Inc., 1994), pp. 6, 82; this volume was also prepared by the Historical Collectors mentioned above; Bridgewater Book: History of the Old Colony Railroad (Boston, Mass.: Hayes and Handy Publishers, 1893), p. 372.

<sup>5</sup> Celebration of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of Bridgewater, Massachusetts (Boston: Prepared by John Wilson and Son, 1856), p. 163; BI, Sept. 2, 1880, Oct. 29, 1887, March 3, 1888, Feb. 6, 1920, Feb. 22, 1924; Crane, pp. 796, 818; Little, "A Wreath of Memories;" "Scrapbook of Joshua Crane," Crane, no pagination; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 5; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 63; the description in this latter source was written by Benjamin A. Spence; "Crane, Joshua Eddy, 1823 to 1888--Merchant, historian," HH, pp. 260-261.\_

garden seeds, and farming tools, Crane and Burrill in 1900 mainly advertised its groceries, stocking certain brands, among them King Arthur Flour and Heinz's Pickles, which are still familiar to shoppers a century later.<sup>6</sup>

While Hooper & Co. and Crane and Burrill had the distinction of being Bridgewater's oldest stores in 1900, other important commercial establishments in Central Square were now catering to the town shoppers. Among them were John H. Fairbanks's hardware store and William Prophett's variety store and furniture and undertaking businesses. In 1864, these two men, after purchasing land from Josiah L. Bassett on the east side of Central Square, across from the town Common, erected a solid Italianate-style wooden-framed and clapboard-covered structure to accommodate their quite different retail-service enterprises. This so-called Fairbanks-Prophett Block of two floors and an attic, still extant, helped fill the space between Central Square's hostelry, 1827, which was known as the Bridgewater Inn beginning in the 1890's, and the Town Hall, 1843. Until the death of Prophett in 1897, these two enterprises jointly owned and occupied this building, a cordial and informal arrangement that continued when Prophett's son William S., who already was part of Wm. Prophet & Son, succeeded to the proprietorship of his father's business. A year later, John E. Flynn, born in Bridgewater in 1866, was brought into this enterprise, bringing with him about five years of experience in the undertaking business in Cambridge, Massachusetts.<sup>7</sup>

Although the nature of their economic endeavors differed, John Hassem Fairbanks, 1835-1929, and William Prophett, 1834-1897, had much in common. As was the case with a number of the town's leading businessmen of the late nineteenth century, these two men came to Bridgewater as adults and, therefore, were not part of the network of old families dating back to the town's early history. Prophett was an English immigrant and, most likely, so was Fairbanks. (Crane, disagreeing with other sources, has Fairbanks being born in Boston.) Prior to their arrivals in Bridgewater around the start of the Civil War,

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<sup>6</sup> BI, Aug. 18, Sept. 1, Dec. 22, 1888, July 1, Dec. 5, 1891, Jan. 7, 14, 1893, Jan. 20, 1894, Dec. 21, 1895, Feb. 18, 1898, Feb. 7, 1902, Feb. 6, 1920, Feb. 22, 1924; Little, "A Wreath of Memories;" Pictorial History, 1987, p. 8; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> BI, May 23, 1885, Dec. 18, 1886, Jan. 7, 1898, Jan. 20, 1899; Townscape Institute, Form 54, pp. 174-176; this comprehensive survey of Bridgewater's historic architecture was started in 1983 when the Board of Selectmen "received a grant from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, through the Massachusetts Historical Commission;" the Townscape Institute was contacted to do the survey which was done under the direction of Edward W. Gordon; this important work, copies of which can be found in the Bridgewater Public Library, will hereafter be cited as the Townscape Institute; "Fairbanks, John Hassem, 1835 to 1929--Merchant," "Prophett, William Spiers, 1858-1932--Funeral Director, Fire Chief," HH, pp. 263, 276; Moore, Images of America:



each had become a skilled craftsman, Fairbanks, a tinsmith, Prophett, a furniture maker and dealer, who, after being employed by a furniture outfit in East Bridgewater in 1857, took over a similar enterprise in the old Bridgewater Town Hall (pre-1843) which once stood on the site of the present New Jerusalem Church. Despite some swings in the town's economic conditions, which mirrored those of a nation emerging as the world's greatest industrial power, the last third of the nineteenth century was generally a good time for these two tradesmen. Self-interest and concern for Bridgewater's well-being prompted them to play an active role in their adopted town's development and civic life. Together they were instrumental, to cite one example, in creating a private company in 1887 to supply running water to Bridgewater and East Bridgewater.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of nineteenth century, the Fairbanks and Prophett enterprises, both with retail and service components, were integral parts of Central Square's configuration of commercial businesses and were well-known and respected by Bridgewater's shoppers. In its edition of January 20, 1899, devoted to describing the retailers in town, the Bridgewater Independent gives us some idea of Fairbanks hardware store and the variety of goods it carried, by writing: "It is well lighted and fitted up in the modern style, with plate glass front, and is filled to its utmost with all kinds of heavy and shelf hardware, crockery and glassware, lamps, cooking and heating apparatus, table and pocket cutlery, paints, oils, and, in fact, a variety of articles too numerous to mention, and which must be seen to be appreciated." Fairbanks was not simply an ordinary hardware store at this point, however. It was also known for installing Glenwood Stoves and for estimating on and entering "into contracts for plumbing work of all kinds...." In the same boosteristic approach, the Independent also praised the furniture and undertaking business of William S. Prophett, which occupied the part of the building adjacent to the Town Hall. In addition to offering a wide-array of first-class furniture and carpets, Prophett's was engaged in upholstering and repairing furniture, made mattresses to order, and carried an "extensive line of well selected goods," making the sale of toys a specialty during the Christmas season. With the assistance of John E. Flynn, William H. Prophett continued to use the second floor of the premise for the undertaking business, which his father had started in 1860, taking "full charge of all the arrangements of funerals" and leaving "nothing undone

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Bridgewater, p.78; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> BI, Nov. 26, Dec. 17, 1897; Crane, p. 796; Bridgewater Book; HH, p. 263; "Prophett, William, 1834 to 1897--Merchant, funeral director," HH, pp. 275-276; William Prophett died on December 12, 1897, not on Oct. 16, 1897,

that would be satisfactory to bereaved families and friends.” In the days before motorized transportation, the firm, of course, relied on fine black horses to pull their hearses, including the one “trimmed in white specially for children.”<sup>9</sup>

After doing business in the Town Hall or patronizing Fairbanks’s and/or Prophet’s, it was easy enough to walk eastward to shop at several stores located in the commercial complex next door. The pre-1890 history of this portion of Central Square remains a bit unclear to me, especially on the matter of whether or not the buildings were connected and, if so, when. Nonetheless, one or two generalizations can be made. Part of the complex dates back to the late 1860’s and, for a number of years, was known as the Mitchell Block. We also know that in 1890 two small structures, housing the Boston Branch Clothing House, Walter King’s printing office, and the law office of Sweet and Folsom, occupied the eastern portion of the property, just south of the Hyland House (renamed the Bridgewater Inn in the early 1890’s). And, whatever the arrangement of buildings, they helped fill the remaining space on the eastern side of Central Square.<sup>10</sup>

This commercial property, however, underwent quite a change in 1891, creating, in good measure, the building complex which still occupies this part of Central Square. After purchasing the Ward estate on the corner of Summer Street and what would become Park Terrace, Albert J. Elwell, “a gentleman of wealth,” moved his family from Boston to Bridgewater in May of 1888. He soon became the owner of the Mitchell property on the eastern side of the Square between the Fairbanks-Prophet Block and the Hyland House. Following the removal of the two small structures mentioned above and having excavation work done for a cellar, he proceeded to build (some would say “rebuild”) the eastern section of what was now called the Elwell Block. This building project was accomplished by using parts of the recently-vacated Centre School, a structure Elwell had bought from the town at public auction for one-hundred dollar. (This large schoolhouse, located on the corner of Grove and Summer Streets, was no longer needed when the new Model School of Bridgewater Normal was opened in September of 1891.)

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as reported in his short biographical sketch in HH, p. 276.

<sup>9</sup> BI, Dec. 1, 1877, April 1, 1879, March 27, 1886, Jan. 7, 14, July 18, Aug. 3, 1893, Jan. 27, Sept. 9, 1894, April 13, Sept. 14, Oct. 19, Dec. 21, 1895, Sept. 25, 1896, Dec. 10, 1897, Feb. 18, 1898, Jan. 20, 1899, March 9, 25, April 20, Sept. 14, Oct. 26, 1900; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>10</sup> BI, Feb. 1, 1879, April 12, 1890, March 28, June 6, July 4, Aug. 8, 1891; Townscape Institute, Form 55, pp. 178-179; this last source was helpful to a degree, but did not present clearly the early history of this block; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 7.

Elwell was to leave Bridgewater in 1905, but his commercial block on the eastern side of Central Square, which is still extant, continued to bear his name until 1910, at which time it was purchased by Joseph A. Bowman, the proprietor of an express company with offices in Boston and Bridgewater. Elwell's estate on Summer Street was torn down a few years after he had moved to Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1905. This grand structure, at least by Bridgewater's standards, was replaced around 1910 by the building that is now occupied by the Political Science Department of Bridgewater State College.<sup>11</sup>

After going through the sad, but necessary, ordeal of making funeral arrangements at Prophett & Flynn or, on a happier note, negotiating with Fairbanks concerning the installation of a modern bathroom, a shopper might have walked next door to the shoe store run by Robert Ferguson, lured by his newspaper ad: "Whatever You Do Buy a Good Shoe." Born in Scotland in 1840, he moved with his family in 1858 to Bridgewater, where his father James was the superintendent of the Bridgewater Iron Works for twenty-eight years. It was natural enough for the young Ferguson to enter the same trade, working as a molder for a number of years in the same company. At the age of thirty-nine, however, he made the decision to open up a shoe store, perhaps not envisioning that the enterprise he created would someday be the oldest of its kind in Bridgewater and one of the largest and most modern in the general area. Established in 1879, Ferguson's store for the first few years, or so, occupied part of the Willis Building on Main Street about where the Bridgewater Savings Bank is now located.. Although the days of the mass production of shoes in large factories in Bridgewater had not yet arrived, Ferguson's retail store thrived during its first decade. But increasing trade prompted him to seek larger quarters.<sup>12</sup>

By the middle 1880's, Ferguson had moved to more commodious quarters in the Mitchell Block

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<sup>11</sup> BI, Dec. 17, 1887, April 7, May 19, 1888, Feb. 9, 1889, July 4, 18, 25, Aug. 8, 22, Sept. 5, Oct. 24, Dec. 5, 1891, Feb. 13, 1892, Oct. 4, 1907, Oct. 28, 1910, March 23, 1923; Little "Wreath of Memories;" it was reported by the Bridgewater Independent that the building housing the old law office of Sweet & Folsom was purchased by George Hayward and moved to his property on Park Avenue; Tales Around the Common: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, ed. by Dorothy Lord Mann, Arthur C. Lord, and J. Kenneth Moore, three of the Bridgewater Historical Collectors (Printed by Dorr's Print Shop, Bridgewater, Harry B. Harding & Son, Inc., Whitman, 1988), p. 4; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 18; Elwell's house, according to this last source, was made of brick and was built by Solomon Washburn; at the time Elwell bought the house, it was rundown and considered "a disgrace to the street;" but after the improvements made by him, it was labeled "an ornament" to this part of the town; around 1910 it was replaced by a house that George Barney occupied around 1914; managed by A. Z. Pratt, the Boston Branch Clothing House in Bridgewater closed down in early 1892, after returning to the reconstructed Elwell Block for only about three months.

<sup>12</sup> Crane, pp. 796, 821-823; BI, Nov. 29, 1901, Sept. 17, 1909; "Ferguson, James--Superintendent," HH, p. 263; "Robert H. Ferguson, "Proprietor of Bridgewater's Leading and Up-to-Date Shoe Emporium," Bridgewater Book; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 83; the narrative with this excellent photograph in Moore was written by Benjamin A. Spence.

(the Elwell Block beginning in 1891), located on the eastern side of Central Square. His new place of business, immediately to the east of Fairbanks hardware store, had previously accommodated the grocery enterprise of Herbert A. Lawrence, whose sister Abbie (she married Ferdinand C. Gammon in 1874) was mainly responsible for the founding of Bridgewater's Methodist church. (Many of my readers, young and old alike, will envision the location if they are familiar with Gilbert's Dance Studio which has occupied this premise since the 1950's). In any event, Ferguson's was the place to go for a good pair of two-dollar Boardman or Franklin shoes. For patrons with the willingness and wherewithal to spend an additional dollar, Patrician Shoes were guaranteed to give "double the wear and the fullest satisfaction." Large families, on the other hand, might have waited for Ferguson's "Annual Shop Worn Sale" to snatch up bargains from the store's large inventory of boots and shoes. In an era when old shoes were not easily thrown out, Ferguson's repair facility in the rear of store was an "entirely separate" business.<sup>13</sup>

In 1900, the proprietor of Bridgewater's leading shoe store could view with satisfaction the previous ten years. His "straight forward and honest business methods" had "built up a thriving business" in its new location. All the while, Ferguson had been "a steady supporter" of "the best interest of Bridgewater," maintaining membership in a number of organizations, including the Central Square Church and the Fellowship Lodge of Masons. No doubt he took great pride in his son Robert H., who not only was the solo cornetist for the Bridgewater brass band, but became its director in February of 1888. This musical ensemble made its headquarters in the Elwell block beginning in December of 1891. Most likely the younger Ferguson at this point was also working in his father's store, perhaps realizing that some day he would become its proprietor.<sup>14</sup>

After leaving Ferguson's, perhaps sporting a new pair of White Canvas Oxfords, one could visit at least three more retail enterprises housed in the Elwell Block, although none of them would stay in business very long after the turn of the century. Billed as a "Watchmaker, Jeweler and Optician," George Henry occupied the space next to Ferguson's. My readers who dine at My Sister and I's in Central Square will undoubtedly enjoy the cuisine even more knowing that this was the spot where Henry carried

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<sup>13</sup> BI, Dec. 1, 1877, Feb. 1, 1879, June 20, Nov. 21, 1885, Aug. 28, 1886, Jan. 7, 1893, Dec. 12, 1897, Nov. 9, 1900, Nov. 29, 1901, Oct. 4, 1907, March 13, 1914, July 20, 1923, Feb. 22, 1924; Bridgewater Book; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 15, 1994, p. 55; See my essay on the Bridgewater churches in 1900, page 14.

<sup>14</sup> BI, July 30, 1887, Feb. 28, 1888, Dec. 5, 1891, March 17, Sept. 29, 1894, March 30, April 27, June 15, Dec. 14, 1895, April 18, Aug. 14, 1896, Aug. 16, 1901, Sept. 17, 1909; Bridgewater Book.

on his trade beginning in June of 1895. He was always prepared to fit complicated lenses, fill “Ophthalmic Surgeons’ Prescriptions,” sell a silver novelty, especially at Christmas time, and, of course, entice his customers to select a watch from his large and assorted collection, with the added assurance that he was ready to repair it if the need arose. In a more general sense, many thought of Henry as a “tinkerer,” someone who had the knack of fixing things, including small electrical devices. His departure from Bridgewater in 1902, prompted the Independent to write that there was “an opening” in town for a man with Henry’s practical skills.<sup>15</sup>

Located in that part of the Elwell Block reconstructed in 1891, the next two enterprises on the eastern side of Central Square in 1900 were operated by proprietresses. This represented quite a change from 1884 when Crane’s discussion of stores in Bridgewater gave no indication of any female-run retail shops in Central Square. Removing her millinery business from the Campello section of Brockton to Bridgewater’s Central Square in the fall of 1891, Miss S. E. Welch took rooms close to her shop, including, for a time, one at the Bridgewater hotel. Each summer, she spent some time at her home, known as Meadow Farm, in nearby Scituate. Her southern neighbor in the Elwell Block by the middle of the 1890’s was George Henry. Known as the Bridgewater Millinery Store, Welch’s advertised “trimmed and untrimmed” hats, all of “the latest styles” at satisfactory prices. A stroll by her windows provided some shoppers an even better sense of Welch’s “large and fine assortment” of women’s hats. Compared to the other milliners in Central Square, many of her hats were ready-made and not uniquely created in consultation with the wearer. I won’t hazard a guess of how much humiliation was involved when a lady saw “her” hat on someone else’s head. Welch’s enterprise was prospering enough in 1900 to allow her to move a year later to one of the stores in the newly-constructed brick addition to the Elwell Block.<sup>16</sup>

Before this extension, Welch’s immediate neighbor to the east and the last store in the block was the “variety or five and ten cent store” of Miss A. M. Foster. A newcomer to Bridgewater, she had only been in business four months before the church bells of Central Square announced the arrival of the year 1899. Using the motto “Honest Goods at Lowest Prices,” Foster’s store, which was “large, commodious

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<sup>15</sup> BI, March 17, Sept. 29, Nov. 24, 1894, May 4, June 15, Dec. 21, 1895, Feb. 18, 1898, Aug. 20, 1897, March 9, May 25, 1900, March 21, 1902.

<sup>16</sup> BI, Oct. 10, Nov. 14, 1891, April 16, 1892, June 10, 1893, April 13, Oct. 5, Dec. 7, 1895, Dec. 4, 1896, Aug. 6, Oct. 15, 1897, Nov. 22, 1901; Crane, p. 796; Townscape Institute, Form 55, pp. 178-179; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903.

and neatly arranged,” from the start “enjoyed a constantly increasing patronage.” Included in her stock were “furnishing goods, notions, crockery and glass ware, stationery, toys, games, confectionery” and other sundry goods. For those customers watching their pennies, “genuine bargains” were “constantly displayed on the 5c. ad 10c. counters.”<sup>17</sup>

It would have been tempting after purchasing some yarn at Foster’s to have a midday meal for thirty-five cents at George J. Alcott’s Bridgewater Inn, the last major building on the eastern side of Central Square to completely face the Common. But, alas, Cole’s Drug Store, immediately east of the Inn, had to be visited, perhaps to procure one of its concoctions to “cure your Cough and Prevent Pneumonia,” or, on a more joyful note, to imbibe a glass of “hot soda before going elsewhere.” The address of Cole’s retail enterprise was listed as Eighteen Central Square, but was only part of a structure with a long and complex history. The original segment facing Summer Street is still extant. Consisting of two floors and dating back to the 1820’s, it is considered to be the town’s first “office building.” Here the business operations of the Carver, Washburn & Co., manufacturers of cotton gins, were conducted. Any study of mid-nineteenth century Bridgewater would by necessity pay considerable attention to this wooden building since a number of well-known citizens made use of it. Among the more prominent was Artemas Hale. Associated with the cotton gin enterprise of Carver, Washburn & Co., he used these quarters to take care of the financial aspects of this concern and to run a general store for the benefit of the workers building the cotton gins at the Carver Pond site. Adding to the liveliness of the place were the stories of Southern life related by the agents who traveled to the South to sell the Carver cotton gins. It also appears that between the 1830’s and 1850’s the premises served as a place for political discussions. During election times, the Whigs (one of the factions that would become part of the new Republican Party of the 1850’s) of the town gathered here to get the local and county voting results sent by telegraph. The uses of this small structure changed with time and included an occupancy by the merchant Lewis Holmes between 1857 and 1862, before he left to take over the post office on the west side of the Square. Immediately after this, the back part of the building became an apothecary shop, used most notably by Dr.

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<sup>17</sup> BI, July 30, 1887, Sept. 29, 1894, April 27, 1895, Jan. 20, 1899, Aug. 13, 1901; Crane, p. 796; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Pictorial History, 1987, pp. 14, 15; Crane, 796; when Crane wrote his history of Bridgewater in 1884, he mentioned Charles F. Meyer, the merchant tailor of Central Square between the early 1870’s and 1895, the year of his death; he had first occupied a store in the Savings Bank building, but by the middle 1890’s his shop had been situated on the eastern side of Square even before Elwell purchased the Mitchell Block in 1891; Meyer’s store was

Benjamin T. Crooker from the middle 1860's to the late 1870's. It was this business that was bought by Orrin Bradford Cole.<sup>18</sup>

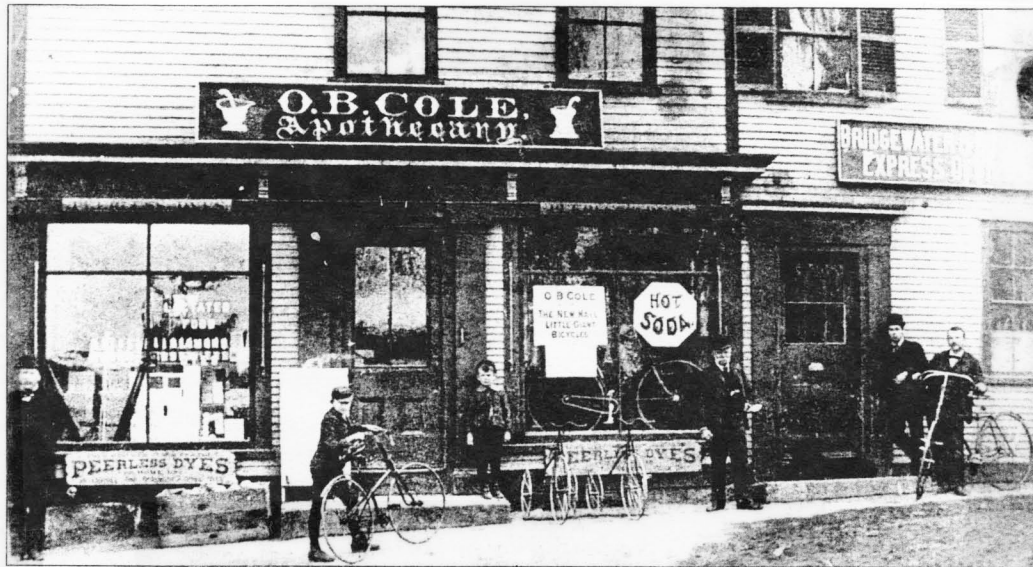
The son of Hezekiah and Deborah Freeman Cole, Orin was born in Carver, Massachusetts, in 1852. He came to Bridgewater from Kingston, Massachusetts, just in time to be listed among Bridgewater's commercial endeavors in Crane's town history of 1884. Reflective of a cultural change in the field of dispensing medicine, Cole's enterprise, first labeled an apothecary, was soon known as a pharmacy or drug store. Among the initial improvements Cole made to the business were "new show cases, half oval, nickel-plated, ... new shelf bottles, and a new prescription case." In the late nineteenth century, an addition was made to the original Carver and Washburn building, and it was this part of the structure with its Central Square address that housed Cole's establishment in 1900. At this time, the entire property was owned by Hosea Kingman, a well-known Bridgewater lawyer, who had married Cole's sister Carrie in 1866. A patron stopping at the store on an evening early in November 1900 might have noticed that acetylene, with its soft and brilliant light, was being used to illuminate the store. Since Cole used the same method of lighting his house on Summer Street, he was among those, mistakenly as it turned out, who believed that this gas would win out in the race with electricity. Perhaps on that same evening you were suffering from your first cold of the season and had faith in Cole's newspaper ad that read: "For those awful colds don't forget that Cole's No. 10 is the Great Cold Healer and Nips it in the Bud." Many people long remembered buying fire works for the Fourth of July from a little shed Cole placed in front of the store each year. After choosing items to help better celebrate the nation's birthday, the thought of indulging in one of Cole's ice cream creations, made and kept cold by ice from Mosquito Mill Pond on Water Street off of Plymouth Street, was always an appealing one. But, then again, Casey's soda fountain could be easily reached by crossing the Little Common, which served like a front yard for Cole's, and Summer Street.<sup>19</sup>

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located in the eastern part of this block, placing it close to the hotel.-

<sup>18</sup> BI, Dec. 1, 1877, Feb. 1, 1879, Jan. 7, 1893, Dec. 21, 1895, Aug. 7, 1914, July 20, 1923, Nov. 22, 1924; Crane, p. 794; Bridgewater Book; Ken Moore, "Hale Store--Benjamin Crooker Store--O. B. Cole Drug Store," Tales Around the Common, p. 38; "Letter of Mrs. E. B. Hull," written around 1908, HH, p. 220; Townscape Institute, Form 242, pp. 559-560.

<sup>19</sup> BI, Jan. 11, March 4, May 9, 1884, Sept. 5, Oct. 7, 1885, Dec. 22, 1888, Feb. 9, March 30, 1889, July 18, 1891, Jan. 7, 14, Oct. 28, 1893, March 23, June 13, 1895, Dec. 21, 1895, May 21, July 2, 1897, March 30, Aug. 31, Oct. 12, Nov. 2, 9, 1900, Sept. 6, 1918; "Ten Years Ago," BI, July 30, 1909; Townscape Institute, Form 215, pp. 505-506, Form 242, p. 560, Form 158, pp. 385-386; on March 29, 1900, Hosea Kingman died at the age of fifty-six in his house on the corner of Grove and South Streets; some of my readers might remember that a funeral home later



Moore, *Images of America: Bridgewater*, p. 65.



Richard J. Casey, the son of Frank and Mary Gorman Casey, was born in Bridgewater in 1865 and grew to manhood at a time when the Irish Catholics came to constitute about one-third of the town's population of 4,000 or so. Reflecting this trend, Bridgewater's only Catholic church, St. Thomas Aquinas, of which Casey was a communicant all his life, had, by far, the largest congregation among the town's churches by the late nineteenth century. Following his education in the public school system, he became a barber, with his first shop being on Wall Street, not far from the Bridgewater iron works. His shop was situated over a market run by John Donovan & Co. In March of 1887, Casey relocated to Broad Street to a barber shop formerly operated by G. E. Rony in his building which the previous years had suffered a serious fire. (The Bridgewater Independent was an occupant of this property and had also been badly effected by the same fire.) Casey's landlord, however, was A. I. Simmons who had bought the Rony property about a month before Casey moved there. Although he made "extensive alterations and improvements in his new shop, Casey, perhaps sensing the need to be even more centrally located, moved again in 1893, this time to a new building on Main Street, "just west of the present Bridgewater Savings Bank." His new shop had a private parlor for ladies' and children's haircutting, the entrance to which could be "gained without passing through the gentlemen's room." A small hall over the hairdressing rooms was rented to various groups, most notably organizations of the Trinity Church across Main Street. Casey was known as a "first-class hairdresser," and his barber shop, according to one source, was "the best known and most popular in town." Passing out "long and nice" cigars to his customers, which he did at Christmas time, certainly did not hurt "Dick's" reputation. Increasingly noted for his business acumen, which was beginning to mark him as "one of Bridgewater's go ahead men," Casey, who married Josie T. Flynn, daughter of Bartholomew Flynn in 1894, also had become an agent for selling bicycles and newspapers. It is not surprising, therefore, that he seized the opportunity to establish another commercial enterprise when the trolley system made its Bridgewater debut in 1897.<sup>20</sup>

In the fall of that year, he rented the first floor of the new Calvin Estes commercial block (not to

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occupied this residence; Crane, p. 796; "Cole, Orrin Bradford, 1852-1918, --Pharmacist," HH, p. 259; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 60, 65; Pictorial History, 1987, pp. 8, 16, 1994, pp. 8, 13, 74; Tales Around the Common, p. 13; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>20</sup> BI, Sept. 2, 1880, Feb. 18, 1884, Aug. 29, 1885, July 17, 1886, Feb. 26, March 19, April 23, 1887, March 24, 1888, Dec. 26, 1891, April 29, 1893, Dec. 1, 1894, Jan. 19, May 18, July 20, Oct. 5, 26, Dec. 14, 1895, Feb. 22, Sept. 14, Nov. 13, 1896, March 26, 1897, May 20, June 10, 17, 24, Jan. 20, 1899, Sept. 15, 1922; "Richard J. Casey & Co.," Bridgewater Book; "Casey, Richard J., 1865 to 1922--Merchant," HH, p. 258; Tales Around the Common, p.

be confused with the 1910 Estes Block). Nestled between the buildings occupied by Rogers's hardware business and Crane and Burrill's general store, this new structure was built by John H. Ball, who had come to Bridgewater in 1894, and was located just a few steps from the corner of Broad and Summer Streets. In these quarters, Casey embarked on a new entrepreneurial adventure, advertised as the "Waiting Room of the Street Railway at Casey's News Depot." (The second floor was used as the business office of the Brockton, Bridgewater, and Taunton Street Railway, the first company to run the system of "electrics" (trolleys) connecting these communities.) Almost immediately, Casey's, initially run by Casey's brother Thomas, became one of the town's most popular and frequented establishments. For those waiting to take the trolley shuttle to the railway station on the corner of Broad and Spring Streets or for those planning to cross the railroad tracks to connect to a trolley heading to East Bridgewater or beyond, Casey's was a pleasant place to spend time, especially as it became what we might today call a "variety store." Enticed by the ads in the Independent, folks in the town began to flock to Bridgewater's newest retail enterprise to buy such items as magazines, periodicals, daily and weekly papers, "as well as choice confectionery, cigars, tobacco and smokers' articles, stationery," and other sundry articles. Some patrons, perhaps more epicurean-inclined, enjoyed the delights of Casey's soda fountain, where only the purest fruit syrups were used. Others were glad to read that Casey had "secured the agency for the sale of Moxie in the three B'waters and Middleboro." For a number of reasons, then, Casey's was a busy place in 1900, the same year in which the proprietor was also playing the leading role in the founding of a chapter of the Knights of Columbus in Bridgewater. The town's Irish Catholics, now constituting the second largest group in Bridgewater's population, certainly took pride in seeing one of their own achieving such success.<sup>21</sup>

The Bridgewater retail firms mentioned so far, except for Hooper & Co., were for the most part situated on the eastern side of Central Square. We now need to cross over to its western side to look at other stores that shoppers patronized in 1900. Among the more prominent was the one run by Albert I. Simmons, known as a "Dealer in Meat and Provisions." Born in Raynham, Massachusetts, in 1852, he attended school there and afterwards went into the meat business. Around the age of thirty, he moved to

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<sup>21</sup> BI, July 2, 1897, Aug. 6, 13, Sept. 3, Oct. 2, 1897, Jan. 21, Feb. 18, March 11, April 1, 1898, Jan. 20, 1899, May 4, June 1, July 15, 1900, Sept. 15, 1922; Bridgewater Book; HH, p. 228; the picture in this last source is important since

Bridgewater, where he resided on Union Street. In 1884, he became the proprietor of a meat market, which had been founded by J. F. Goward and was located underneath Joshua E. Crane's general store. From the start, Simmons not only enticed the Bridgewater public by offering a great variety of meats, but also by featuring fresh produce such as asparagus and strawberries. Unlike previous proprietors, Simmons, aided by "carts driven through the town every week-day," succeeded in establishing a large trade in this building that traced its origins back to the early 1800's. Simmons continued to operate his business in this basement location on Broad Street until 1889, the year after Henry L. Crane and Henry T. Burrill become the proprietors of this country store on the death of the elder Crane. In April of 1889, in what was considered to be an "important real estate change" in Central Square, Simmons purchased from P. O. Clark the "desirable lot and buildings" at the junction of Main Street and Central Square, which the latter, it will be recalled, had bought from the Bridgewater Iron Company the previous year. Simmons moved with dispatch to "remove the wooden building on the corner...and erect a small two-story building" to house his meat business. There had been talk that a large brick business block might be erected on this site, but this never was done, even though Simmons himself saw this happening in the not too distance future. To better orient my readers, we are talking about the lot where the Bridgewater Savings Bank now has its drive-in banking facility. In any case, Simmons now owned not only his own store, but the very old one next door, which had been occupied by Avery F. Hooper since 1874. Evidently the relations between the two firms were friendly enough since there was an interior connection between them, making it convenient for patrons, especially in cold and stormy weather. On a less positive note, it took the "untiring efforts" of the night patrolman to free the corner in front of Simmons's and Hooper's stores "from the roughs" who tended to "congregate there."<sup>22</sup>

The Central Square Market, the official name of Simmons's new market, was doing a flourishing trade by 1900 and had achieved the distinction of being Bridgewater's largest and most popular meat store. Before the re-organization of the firm in the early 1900's, Simmons was its sole owner, but his brother-in-law Frank C. Drake was in charge of its operations for several years in the middle 1890's. At

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it shows the location of Casey's before the building of the 1910 Estes Block; HH, p. 258.

<sup>22</sup> BI, Feb. 15, 1879, Jan. 4, Feb. 1, 29, April 4, 1884, May 23, Sept. 12, Oct. 24, 31, 1885, May 1, 1886, May 21, 28, July 10, 1887, June 9, Dec. 22, 1888, Jan. 19, March 23, April 20, 27, May 4, 11, 18, June 8, 22, 1889, Feb. 28, 1891, Jan. 20, 1899, March 21, 1902, Sept. 27, 1912; "Twenty Years Ago," BI, May 1, 1908; Bridgewater Book; Crane, p.796.

this time also, Bartholomew Flynn and Alexander Cushman became closely associated with this retail business on what had become one of the busiest corners in town. While offering a variety of groceries, it was Simmons's meat department, with its sawdust covered floor, that had the greatest appeal to many folks in the town. To a generation not yet aware of cholesterol readings, how could the market's neat and tasteful arrangement of "an excellent assortment of prime Western beef, veal, lamb, mutton, pork, poultry, and game in season" be shunned, especially when Sunday dinner was still a highlight of the week. Like many other products in the store, including lard, butter, and coffee beans, meats were not prepackaged. Rather, they were cut to order. Helping to satisfy his numerous customers, Simmons had six assistants and four delivery wagons by the century's end. Using ice from North Street, he was able to ensure the safety and freshness of the meat in the market's storage room and in the butcher cart. One less appealing aspect of shopping at the Central Square Market had nothing to do with its proprietor. Beginning in 1897, patrons had to get used to the screeching sound of the trolleys as they made the sharp turn from Main Street to Central Square. Alas, such was the price of progress.<sup>23</sup>

After shopping at A. I. Simmons and/or Hooper & Co., it was easy enough to walk southward to patronize one of the several retail enterprises facing the western edge of the Common, which was graced by lovely trees, especially the "magnificent old elms." Perhaps a visit to the Bridgewater Saving Bank Building was the first order of business since it housed both the town's post office and its sole bank at the turn of the century. With money withdrawn from savings, a shopper might then have decided to visit one of the commercial establishments in the Keith Block, a wooden structure sandwiched between the old brick Bank Building and the new Odd Fellows Block. As is the case with some other Bridgewater structures, long-gone or still extant, the history of the Keith property on the western side of Central Square remains, at least for the present writer, somewhat elusive. When the Keith block was sold in 1924, it was reported that the Keith family, beginning with Mitchell Keith, had owned the structure for about one hundred years. Evidently, its easterly end, next to the bank building, was not quite as old. In any case, during most of the nineteenth century, the Bridgewater Post Office was located in this small wooden "addition." In May of 1888, a fire badly damage the Keith Block, and, after a brief stay in the

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<sup>23</sup> BI, Jan. 16, 1892, Jan. 7, 1893, Jan. 27, 1894, Jan. 13, Nov. 2, 1895, Jan. 25, Oct. 30, Nov. 20, 1896, Jan. 20, 1899, March 21, Aug. 2, 1902, July 1, 22, 1904, Sept. 27, 1912, May 16, 1913; "Icing and Ice Houses," Tales Around the Common, p. 27; "Flynn, Bartholomew, 1841--1895--Merchant," HH, p. 263; Pictorial History, 1994, p.

Mitchell Block on the eastern side of Central Square, the post office moved to the first floor of the Bank Building, where it remained until 1925. Immediately south of the Keith's commercial property was the Mitchell Keith House, one of Central Squares oldest structures. In 1897, this house, owned by Thomas Crocker since the early 1870's, was moved backward, away from the street, to make room for the building of Odd Fellows Block. Before the addition of this valuable building to the western side of the Square, the portion of the Keith property, adjacent to the bank, had been apparently rebuilt into a three-floor structure, providing even more space for commercial enterprises than before the fire and the displacement of the post office.<sup>24</sup>

"One of the most reliable watchmakers, jewelers and engravers doing business in Bridgewater or vicinity," Harry A. Clark occupied one of the stores in the Keith Block for over thirty years. A native of nearby Middleboro, he had moved to Bridgewater as a young teenager in 1874, when his father, Paul O. Clark, and Avery F. Hooper became the proprietors of this town's oldest store. Mechanically inclined, he was apprenticed in 1880 to Edward A. Hewett, whose business was located in the Keith block, "to learn the watch and clock making trade." In 1887, when the latter moved his enterprise to Brockton, Massachusetts, a much larger community, Clark, still only in his late twenties, took over the Central Square store and immediately proceeded to improve its interior. The following year, Clark's business suffered a setback when it was one of several stores in the Keith block to be damaged by a fire that started in the post office in May of 1888. Fortunately, thanks in part to \$1000 worth of insurance, Keith returned to his quarters in early July. Three years later, more than one passerby must have been intrigued by a revolving stand, powered by a miniature electric motor, placed in Clark's window to display his fine assortment of jewelry. For those more athletically-oriented, it was comforting to know that Clark had become an agent for Waverly Victor Bicycles. One wonders how many town residents could have come up with the selling price of "\$75 to &100." More customers would have undoubtedly found something in their price range among other items in Clark's inventory, including "gold and silver watches, clocks, jewelry articles, solid silver and plated ware, souvenirs, novelties, etc." On a more practical level, some

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<sup>24</sup> BI, May 26, July 14, 1888, May 25, 1900, Feb. 27, 1903, Feb. 22, June 6, 1924; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; "Bridgewater in 1835," HH, pp. 216- 217; Ken Moore, "Map of 1852," BI, May 8, 1958, found in Tales Around the Common; Pictorial History, 1987, pp. 19-21, 1994, pp. 7, 28, 82; pictures in these last two sources were invaluable as I tried to figure out the chronology of the Keith Block in the late nineteenth century; Townscape Institute, Form 43,

patrons simply went to Clark's store to have things repaired, not only watches and clocks, but also "Spectacles and Eye-Glasses." To get "a share of the Optical Work" of the town, Clark "engaged the services of a Skillful Optician" to fill eyeglass prescriptions. More will be said about Clark in subsequent sections, but by 1900, having been engaged in his vocation for almost twenty years, he had become one of Bridgewater's "best known citizens and merchants," a man respected for his "honorable" dealings with others.<sup>25</sup>

Odd Fellows Building, unlike the old Keith commercial block next door, was a newcomer to Bridgewater's Central Square in 1900. The land on which this business block was erected had been purchased by the trustees of the Bridgewater Building Association in December of 1896 from Thomas W. Crocker, who had been involved in a number of commercial enterprises, including grocery and millinery businesses, prior to becoming a real estate agent in the late 1880's. Before construction began, Crocker's house, once owned by Mitchell Keith, had to be moved backward, away from the Square. Built by Keith & Hayward and still extant, the wooden Odd Fellows structure with its Italianate-style features, three stories, and gravel roof was dedicated in December of 1897. Mainly for the use of the Pioneer Lodge of Odd Fellows, a fraternal organization, a branch of which was formed in Bridgewater in 1877, it also became the home of several stores, service enterprises, and organizations, including the newly-formed Baptist society. Our concern at this point is with Schelde's men's store and Alden's grocery which occupied the two commercial spaces on the street floor of this new structure.<sup>26</sup>

In 1900, Christian Schelde became the proprietor of an enterprise, advertised as a "leading Gents Furnisher." At the time, men, somewhat unlike a century later, usually dressed formally when carrying out their religious, professional, and civic duties and responsibilities. Lured by one of Schelde's first ads, rhetorically asking "DO YOU WANT TO SAVE MONEY!", men and boys in Bridgewater began to patronize this latest addition to the town's list of retail outfits. One cannot rule out, of course, the

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pp. 149-150, Form 44, pp. 151-152, Form 45, pp. 153-154.

<sup>25</sup> BI, Jan. 4, 1884, Oct. 16, 1886, Nov. 5, 1887, May 26, July 7, 1888, Feb. 9, 1889, July 18, Dec. 26, 1891, Oct. 28, 1893, April 3, July 20, Dec. 26, 1895, Oct. 29, 1897, Jan. 20, 1899, Feb. 22, April 5, Sept. 27, 1901, June 25, 1915, May 30, 1917, Nov. 8, 1918, Feb. 13, 1920, Feb. 22, June 6, 1924; Crane, p. 796; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Townscape Institute, Form 43, pp. 149-150, Form 160, pp. 389-390; Hewett continued to live in Bridgewater on 39 Pleasant Street in an Italianate-style house which he had built in 1879; after he retired in the early 1900's, he served for many years as Bridgewater's town clerk; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>26</sup> BI, April 1, 1879, Jan. 11, April 18, 25, May 2, 1884, June 6, 1885, Dec. 18, 1886, Jan. 14, 1893, April 4, Dec. 11, 1896, April 23, 30, Aug. 6, Oct. 29, Nov. 19, Dec. 3, 1897; Townscape Institute, Form 44, pp. 151-152, Form 45, pp. 153-154; Moore: Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 77; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 20; Atlas of Plymouth

possibility that in some cases the actual shopping was done by wives and mothers. Whatever the case may be, Schelde's took orders for "Custom and Ready-Made Clothing." It was difficult for a customer to resist going home without a new suit or overcoat, reportedly selling for ten percent off "of the regular Boston retail price." Less expensive items, including underwear, socks, gloves, and shirts, were guaranteed to "please even the shrewdest buyers." Serving as an agent for the White Star Laundry, a Brockton company, Schelde's urged its clientele to "Leave Your Bundles With Us," an ad that most likely caught the eyes of Bridgewater women. While Christian Schelde was to remain the proprietor of the store for only four years before leaving Bridgewater altogether, he made a number of innovations in the business which will warrant further discussion in the next section.<sup>27</sup>

The other retail trade on the first floor of Odd Fellows Block was the Central Square Grocery. (Reflecting a change in proprietorship in 1912, some old-timers might remember this market under the name, L. H. Washburn.) Between 1897 and 1899, L. Melvin Leach ran this enterprise in a space measuring 18x80 feet, dimensions indicative of the shape of the building itself, with its narrow front facing the Common. If a report of early in 1899 is valid, the market under his direction was successful from the start, enjoying "a lucrative and rapidly increasing patronage" in what was considered to be "a first-class establishment." At this point, I don't know what prompted a change in the store's proprietorship as the century ended; but in 1900, Isaac R. Alden took over the enterprise, and his name would be associated with the business for over a decade.<sup>28</sup>

A descendant of John and Priscilla Alden of the original Plymouth Colony, he was born in Bridgewater in 1844 and, as a very young man, "made a brilliant record for meritorious service" in the Civil War. Known for his "integrity and cheerfulness," Alden, like Henry T. Burrill, a fellow retailer, learned the grocery business by working for Hooper's for many years. Officially named the Central Square Grocery (not to be confused with the Simmons's Central Square Market), this small store was usually referred to as Alden's. Whatever name was used, the new proprietor, following in the footsteps of his predecessor, aimed "to handle only high class Groceries," fresh and at the "lowest prices." More will be said about this market in subsequent sections, including reminiscences of Louise Dickinson Rich,

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County, 1903.

<sup>27</sup> BI, May 4, Sept. 21, Oct. 26, Nov. 16, 1900, July 1, 1904.

<sup>28</sup> BI, Nov. 19, Dec. 3, 1897, Jan. 21, Feb. 18, Aug. 6, 1898, Jan. 20, 1899; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903.

as she recounted her early childhood days growing up in Bridgewater in the early 1900's.<sup>29</sup>

No discussion of the retail firms in Central Square would be complete without mention of F. N. Churchill, a dry goods store (as opposed to a grocery or hardware enterprise) of some importance, located in the Masonic building, a few doors south of Alden's. This mid-nineteenth-century wooden structure was purchased by Fellowship Lodge, Bridgewater's oldest Masonic order, four years after the Civil War. Originally a two story building, a third floor, serving as a hall for this fraternal organization, was added in 1872. Following a fire in April of 1884, a two-storied front, bringing the structure fifteen feet closer to the sidewalk, was added. Prior to the establishment of Churchill's enterprise in 1894, several proprietors, including his immediate predecessor, D. L. Bodfish, ran dry goods enterprises in this block. Unfortunately, at least from an historian's point of view, the old Masonic building no longer looks eastward to the Common across the street. In the late 1960's, it was torn down to make way for the new home of Fellowship Lodge.<sup>30</sup>

A native of East Bridgewater, where he attended the local schools and resided the better part of his life, Frank N. Churchill, 1858-1915, moved his family to Broad Street in Bridgewater when he took over the commercial premises formerly occupied by Bodfish, who had gone to Palmer, Massachusetts, taking practically all of the enterprise's stock with him. Having been a traveling salesman for Brown-Durrell Co., a wholesale dry good house in Boston, Churchill was uniquely qualified to become the proprietor of one of the town's largest retail outfits. In the late 1890's, the location of his establishment was enhanced when it became a terminal for the trolleys from Taunton, Middleboro, and Brockton. By Bridgewater's standards, it was a large store, measuring thirty by eighty feet. Flanked by two show windows, the entrance was in the center of the building, with four or five wide steps leading into the store itself. Along with Hooper's and Fairbanks's, Churchill's was one the three biggest advertisers in the Bridgewater Independent.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to such items as toilet soap, books, dolls, cards, cloths of many kinds, and "other

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<sup>29</sup> BI, May 4, Nov. 16, 1900, July 31, 1908; Crane, p. 804.

<sup>30</sup> BI, April 1, 1879, July 18, Dec. 5, 1891, Jan. 7, 1893, Oct. 20, 1894, June 18, 1897, Jan. 20, 1899, June 19, Sept. 11, 1914, May 5, 1933; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Townscape Institute, Form 47, pp. 157-158; HH, p. 235, a photograph of D. L. Bodfish; Crane, p. 810; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 20;

<sup>31</sup> BI, Jan. 20, 1899, June 19, 1914, Aug. 13, 1915, April 21, 1916; Louise Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms (Orleans, Massachusetts: Parnassus Imprints, 1983), pp. 28-29; first published in 1955, this last source describes Churchill's as it was in the early 1900's; by the late 1890's Churchill owned a cranberry bog in nearby Carver, an



items too numerous to mention,” ready-to-wear clothes could be bought at the town’s leading dry goods store. (Beginning in the 1850’s, the manufacturing of clothes had been made possible with the invention of the sewing machine.) With the help of Herbert E. Reed, who worked at Churchill’s from the start, males of all ages, perhaps accompanied by mothers or wives, could make the weighty decisions of what to select from the various brand of men’s heavy pants, boy’s short-knee pants, long underwear (perhaps winters were not colder back then, but it was harder to keep houses warm), hats, socks, collarless shirts, collars, and winter gloves. With his connection to “an importing and manufacturing house in Boston,” Churchill was able to supply the fairer sex of all ages in Bridgewater with a host of ready-made clothing items. Yet, at the turn of the century, many Bridgewater women, some out of economic necessity, continued to make family clothing out of fabrics selected from the large assortment offered by the store. One can sympathize with a young girl’s chagrin, as she ventured forth to start a new school year, on discovering that the pattern and color of her new school clothes were strikingly similar to an outfit worn by a classmate. Perhaps family members were less concerned about the heavy sweaters and stocking caps that were often knitted at home with yarn from Churchill’s. In any case, dry goods stores similar to Churchill’s were found in the centers of most American communities, large and small, providing a plethora of products in the days before there was easy access to department stores in large cities or the construction of shopping malls, easily reached a century later by the ubiquitous automobile.<sup>32</sup>

While agonizing over whether to buy one of Churchill’s manicure sets or glove boxes as a Christmas present for someone in the family, a Bridgewater mother might also be thinking about the holiday dinner and the need to stop at Lawrence Costa’s Fruit Store, located in the wooden building immediately south of its much larger neighbor, the Masonic Block. When this small structure was demolished in 1976, the Bridgewater Independent’s lamented the loss of this historical building, but said nothing about its past prior to the 1930’s. We do know, however, that for more than twenty years Darius Cushman, the owner of the block, used part of it for his boot and shoe business. After his death in 1897, the building was sold and became known for a short time as the Nye Block. Newspaper accounts until the middle of 1900 have L. Costa conducting his fruit enterprise at this location. (It appears that Costa

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agricultural endeavor that would replace his interest in the dry goods business after 1910.

<sup>32</sup> BI, Aug. 6, 1891, Nov. 16, Dec. 21, 1895, Feb. 15, June 20, Nov. 13, 20, 1896, Dec. 24, 1897, May 27, Jan. 20, 1899, March 9, April 20, May 25, July 6, Sept. 21, 1900; the sewing machine was invented in Europe in the 1850s,

moved here from an earlier location on Broad Street.) Then, on July 19, 1900, Albert J. Elwell, already the owner of a large block on the eastern side of the Common, added to his property holdings by buying the Nye building. Nevertheless, for another year, Costa's stand was still advertised as being in a building with that name. Whether this real estate transfer had any impact on Costa's patrons is hard to say. Most likely, they were more interested in the "Consignments of Fresh Fruit...received daily" at Costa's and its proprietor's fine selections of confectionery, cigars, and oysters.<sup>33</sup>

Having forgotten to pick up some cold remedy at Cole's, it was more convenient, on leaving Costa's, to stop at the Wilcox's Pharmacy, rather than returning to the eastern side of the Square. This drug store was located in the Washburn Block between the Tory House, Central Square's oldest structure, and the Central Square Church, which had the largest Protestant congregation in Bridgewater. Still extant, this building, now occupied by an aluminum siding and window company, was erected in the middle of the 1870's for Dr. Nahum Washburn, an 1832 graduate of Dartmouth College and a pioneer dentist in Southeastern, Massachusetts. By the time of Washburn's death in 1883, his son, also Nahum, who was an 1872 graduate of the College of Pharmacy in Boston, had been practicing his profession on the first floor of the property for almost a decade. By the late 1880's, for whatever reason, Washburn's drugstore business was in financial trouble, "with liabilities of \$10,000, and nominal assets of only a few hundred dollars." In late August of 1888, Henry A. and Nathaniel F. Wilcox became Washburn's successors, operating Wilcox Bros. jointly for nine years before Nathaniel became the sole proprietor. Offering competition to Cole's, the Wilcox pharmacy, operating in a space twenty by fifty feet, "gave particular attention" to its "prescription department," and to over-the-counter remedies such as "Cleveland's Lung Healer," which sold for twenty-five cents. For believers in preventive medicine, perhaps a bottle of tonic composed of "Beef, Wine, and Iron" was a more desirable purchase. More

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but improved upon by two Americans, Elias Howe, Jr., and Isaac M. Singer.

<sup>33</sup> BI, Dec. 1, 1877, Jan 4, 11, 1884, Oct. 31, 1885, Aug. 3, Dec. 21, 1895, Sept. 17, 1897, March 11, 1898, March 4, June 1, July 20, 1900, May 10, 1901, March 10, 1905, July 30, 1923, Feb. 22, 1924, March 25, 1976; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903, listed the block under the name of A. J. Elwell; Crane, p. 796; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 20; "Costa, Lawrence--Merchant," HH, p. 260; this latter source asserts that Costa, "was the first Italian to settle in Bridgewater;" I cannot verify this assertion, and, furthermore, his name might indicate some Portuguese ancestry; the bulldozing of this property in March of 1976 did not occur without some "lamentations;" in addition to those of Mrs. Alice Hanson, the town's Building Inspector Walter Zaverucha was quoted as saying to the Independent's editor: "Will we come over and wreck your building like this next?"; evidently the newspaper agreed with such sentiments, writing: "Appreciation of antiquity is in order in the centennial of the papers and the bicentennial of the country"; beginning in late 1895, another occupant of the building where Costa had its fruit stand was the cash grocery store of Clarence Sturtervant.

appealing to other customers were the “toilet articles, perfumery, stationery, confectionery, and cigars,” and magazines on display in the store. Bridgewater’s two pharmacies had their loyal clienteles, enticing soda fountains, and special outside firework booths during the Fourth of July holiday. But Wilcox’s never made or served ice cream, one of the reasons it never rivaled Cole’s as a popular gathering place for town folk and “Normals.” Undoubtedly, however, the Wilcox brothers would be pleased to know that the Washburn building still looks out at the western side of the Common, whereas the one occupied by its rival has been replaced by another structure.<sup>34</sup>

While the vast majority of the retail outfits in 1900 surrounded the Common, there were other well-known stores near Central Square and others some distance from the town’s center. Among them was Jerome B. Rogers’s “hardware” enterprise on Broad Street, a thoroughfare that became increasingly commercialized in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Born in 1840 in Chatham, one of Massachusetts’s Cape Cod towns, Rogers went to sea for a short time after the Civil War. In 1868, having learned the tinsmith trade in Sandwich and Sagamore, also Cape Cod communities, he moved to Bridgewater. Here he entered the employ of Charles M. Jewett, who ran a tin shop in a two-storied wooden building, no longer extant, a short distance from the corner of Broad and Summer Streets. Dating back to the first half of the nineteenth century, its premises, at different times, had been used for a hat shop, a paint shop, and printing office, before being occupied by a tin enterprise. After working in the shop for only three months, Rogers unexpectedly had the opportunity to purchase the tin business from Jewett, but not the building. Perhaps this lack of ownership reduced his liability when a fire in the early 1870’s, caused by spontaneous combustion, did extensive damage to the structure.<sup>35</sup>

Known for his work as a tinsmith in his early days in Bridgewater, including the employment of a cart to peddle his hand-made articles, Rogers broadened the base of his services, including roofing work for the Bridgewater Iron Works before it was taken over by the Stanley company. Taking advantage of the town’s new water system in the late 1880’s, he also branched out into the plumbing business,

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<sup>34</sup> BI, April 1, 1879, Jan. 4, 1884, Sept. 1, Dec. 22, 1888, June 1, Oct. 12, 1889, Feb. 22, 1890, March 14, 1891, Feb. 20, 1892, Jan. 7, July 22, Oct. 21, 28, 1893, Nov. 24, 1894, May 25, July 13, Dec. 21, 1895, Feb. 25, 1898, Jan. 20, 1899, Nov. 16, 1900, April 5, May 3, 1901, Dec. 6, 1912, “Twenty Years Ago,” BI, April 3, 1917; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Crane, pp. 793-794, 796; Bridgewater Book; Townscape Institute, Form 50, pp. 163-164; H. A. Wilcox purchased a drug store in Woburn, Massachusetts, in early 1898.

<sup>35</sup> Crane, p. 796; this nearby retail neighbor and the Town’s historian simply characterized Rogers’s enterprise as “stoves, etc.,” Bridgewater Book; BI, Jan. 20, 1899, Feb. 18, 1910, March 22, 1912, March 22, 1918; Pictorial

completing, for example, “a most creditable piece of work in piping” the Plymouth County fairgrounds. Around the same time, he made an “addition to the rear of his store on Broad Street to accommodate his increasing business. By 1900, Rogers was probably most widely associated with this retail enterprise, where many of the items now offered were massed-produced in a country experiencing the industrial revolution. The following account, written in early 1899, gives some idea of what patrons had come to expect of this hardware business: “His store...is commodious and neatly arranged, and a varied assortment of goods is carried, including stoves, ranges, furnaces, tin ware, hardware, hollow ware, lead, zinc, glass, putty, pumps, and, in fact, everything usually found in a store of this kind.” As the century ended, Rogers had been in business for thirty years, making him one of the senior members among the town’s retailers, who were in the process of establishing the Commercial Club, an organization mainly concerned with promoting practical steps to benefit the economic development of the town and, not incidentally, their own enterprises. On a less weighty note, Rogers must have enjoyed his daily walks to his store from Church Street, where he and his family resided for many years <sup>36</sup>

After making a non-perishable purchase at Rogers hardware store, a shopper might have found it difficult to resist making a visit next door to Balboni’s Fruit Store to buy a more palatable item. Another indication of Broad Street’s emerging commercialization, this small enterprise was started by Joseph Balboni in 1897, the same year Casey had started his business a short distance away. Balboni and his brother had been operating a store in Haverhill, Massachusetts, a much larger community to the north, when a wholesaler in Merchants Row in Boston told them of available retail space in Bridgewater in a wooden building immediately east of the one occupied by Rogers. While his brother chose to remain where he was, Joseph decided to move to Bridgewater and establish a retail fruit business in the vacant premises on Broad Street. At the turn of the century, there were very few Italians residing in Bridgewater, especially compared to the Irish, the second largest component of the town’s population; some Italian laborers had been “imported” to build the trolley system in the late 1890’s. In addition to selling fruits grown locally, including tomatoes, strawberries, and apples, J. Balboni, as the store itself advertised, also carried fruits such as bananas, oranges, fancy lemons, figs, pineapples, and coconuts, not

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History, 1987, pp. 18, 24; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 64, 86, 87; going down Broad Street, Rogers’s store was next to Casey’s. —

<sup>36</sup> BI, Sept. 2, 1880, Jan. 11, 1884, May 23, 1885, Sept. 1, 1888, Oct. 28, 1893, Dec. 21, 1895, Feb. 18, 1898, Jan. 20,

unknown items, but just starting to constitute an important component of the ordinary American's diet in the late nineteenth century. Peanuts, candy, tonics, cigars, and tobacco also enticed some Bridgewater folk to patronize Balboni's. Customers must have been disappointed in discovering on August 9, 1900, that their favorite fruit stand had joined other Italian-run businesses in Bridgewater in closing from nine to one in observance of Italy's King Umberto's funeral. We will have more to say about this retail enterprise in subsequent sections since it would continue to serve the town for many years. The Balboni family would become an important part of the Bridgewater community during the course of the twentieth century.<sup>37</sup>

Not all the retail businesses in Bridgewater were located in Central Square or on Broad Street. For those in need of any type of lumber or other building materials, Hutchinson's Lumber Yard on Spring Street was the place to go. The genesis of this enterprise dates back to the 1880's., when A. S. Lyon, cited by Crane as one of Bridgewater's "builders," ran a successful lumber business on Broad Street. As the decade came to an end, he moved his business to a three and a half acre lot close to the corner of Spring and Plymouth Streets, which he had purchased from Nahum Stetson for about \$700. It was Lyon's enterprise that Wendell P. Hutchinson, who had "handled" lumber "in every shape and condition since he was a boy," purchased in 1898; although the land continued to be owned by Lyon's widow. The business remained prosperous under the new proprietorship, selling its first lot of lumber on April 2, 1898, to the Henry Perkins foundry, already Bridgewater's oldest family-run manufacturing company. In the same year, Hutchinson could boast of purchases made by George S. McNeeland, a well-known general contractor in the town, Henry J. Miller's, who ran a tack factory on Hale Street, and the Bridgewater Normal School. By the turn of the century, Hutchinson's advertisements, could rhetorically ask: "Where Do You Buy Your Lumber?" This thriving establishment was to remain part of the Bridgewater scene for many years, and, most likely, Hutchinson enjoyed the pleasant walk to his lumber yard from his "beautiful home on Shaw road."<sup>38</sup>

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1899, April 5, 1901, March 22, 1912, July 30, 1915, March 22, 1918.

<sup>37</sup> Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. I, p. 335; Tales Around the Common, p. 12; BI, Aug. 10, 1900, June 7, 1901, Aug. 20, 1920.

<sup>38</sup> BI, Jan. 11, March 4, 11, May 2, 1884, May 23, Sept. 19, 1885, June 1, 29, Dec. 28, 1889, Dec. 6, 1891, April 5, 1901, June 14, 1907, Feb. 27, June 5, 1925; Crane, p. 796; "W. P. Hutchinson," Bridgewater Book; Arthur C. Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," Tales Around the Common, p. 46; Atlas of Plymouth Country, 1903; History of the Old Colony Railroad, p. 372; Townscape Institute, Form 203, pp. 480-481.

For those living in the outlying districts of Bridgewater in 1900, it was not always convenient or possible to shop in the center of town, especially if the trolleys did not serve their particular area or they lacked a horse to help them reach Central Square. It is not surprising, therefore, that many inhabitants in the town's periphery came to rely on small neighborhood stores to secure such things as groceries, newspapers, beverages, confectionery, and tobacco products. (Bridgewater in 1900 was a "dry" community, where saloons and the selling and purchase of alcoholic refreshments were prohibited.) In subsequent chapters, a number of these small retail enterprises will be discussed, including Henry Sheehan's store on the corner of Main and Center Streets, but at this point only the store on the corner of Pleasant and Prospect Streets, about three miles southwest of the Common in Bridgewater's Scotland area, will be mentioned. In 1900, W. H. H. Andrews was running a grocery at this intersection in a building that passersby can still take note of a century later. (For many years, some older citizens associated this store and corner with Arthur R. Tinkham, but it was not until 1905 that he bought the business from Andrews.) At the turn of the century, Andrews apparently was doing well, making an addition to the building and continuing to operate a grocery route to Titicut and Middleboro. Since Scotland, unlike some of the eastern districts of the town, had the advantage of being on the trolley line, in this case between Bridgewater and Taunton, Andrew's store increased its trade by serving as a waiting point for travelers going in either direction. That his store served as a post office sub-station (as an older section of the town, Scotland had had a postal facility going back to 1879) certainly was another factor contributing to Andrew's lively retail enterprise.<sup>39</sup>

### **Services in Bridgewater**

#### **1900**

Not all the businesses frequented by Bridgewater customers were retail enterprises. Others rendered a particular service, although they might have also sold some ready-made products. Particularly important to the ladies of any self-respecting community were the milliners, quite often a single woman with an artistic bent, who designed, made, trimmed, and, in some case, carried manufactured hats. While

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<sup>39</sup> BI, Oct. 5, 1900, Aug. 16, Dec. 20, 1901, April 28, 1905; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 39; Bridgewater Book.

the 1890's were quite revolutionary in beginning to challenge the uncomfortable nature of women clothing, which was so dominant in the Victorian era, elaborate and individually-designed hats were still the order of the day and would be for some time. Whether attending church, shopping in Central Square, enjoying a meeting of the newly-formed Ousamequin Club, or joining in public celebrations such as the one on Memorial Day, the women of Bridgewater wore hats most likely created by Emma A. Hermann, T. A. Collier, or, as mentioned earlier, S. E. Welch who included some millinery work in her store in the Elwell Block. These three women were devoted to their profession, traveling each year to New York City and Boston to attend the spring and fall millinery openings in order to apprise their Bridgewater clienteles of the latest styles in hats and bonnets.<sup>40</sup>

Collier, whose enterprise was located on the western side of Central Square in the same block housing Costa's fruit store, would stay in business only a few years after the turn of the century. It was a different story with Hermann. Coming to Bridgewater from nearby Middleboro in 1899, she was at the beginning of a long career that would make her an increasingly familiar and respected part of the Bridgewater's commercial community. Her quarters were located on the front part of the second floor of the Independent Block, a building that was situated between Odd Fellows and Masonic Blocks and that had just been moved and remodeled by its owner Thomas W. Crocker. (This writer cannot refrain from mentioning that this structure was torn down in the fall of 2002.) In future chapters, I will have more to say about E. A. Hermann, a tall, slim, attractive, and stylish woman, whose penchant for bird watching might have classified her as an amateur ornithologist. What mattered to the women of the town in 1900, however, was their discovery "that the home millinery establishments" were "as much up to date as those in the large cities."<sup>41</sup>

The men of Bridgewater in 1900, on the other hand, were equally pleased with the tailoring business of Sumner G. Duckworth, who moved his business from the Elwell Block in Central Square to

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<sup>40</sup> BI, March 9, Sept. 21, 1900; Lois W. Banner, "Fashion and Style," The Reader's Companion to American History, edited by Eric Foner and John A. Garraty (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), p. 384; a scanning of the Bridgewater Independent in the twenty or so years before 1900 indicates that women of the town had a choice of frequenting several millinery enterprises; I have chosen not to discuss banking as a service industry in this section of my work; rather, I will, at some point, devote a separate essay to this important topic; for further reference to the Independent Block see page 37.

<sup>41</sup> BI, Aug. 20, 1897; March 9, 23, June 1, 22, Sept. 21, 28, Oct. 5, Nov. 9, Dec. 27, 1900, July 26, Sept. 27, 1907; Dickinson Rich, Innocence under the Elms, pp. 244-247; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 20; Townscape Institute, Form 46, pp. 155-156; Bridgewater Book; the Independent Block had served as a barn for Crocker before it was moved to the street location and renovated.

Broad Street in 1895, occupying a store which housed the bakery of E. H. & M. Hemenway between 1890 and 1895. A native of Bridgewater, Duckworth, one of several businessmen adding to the growing commercial nature of Broad Street in the late nineteenth century, was a young and popular tailor, known for his ability to turn out first-class garments, such as fine overcoats made from grey oxford cloth, selling at \$25.00, and handsome, but looser, Raglan overcoats. It was said that no “sweat-shop work, no shoddy, no cotton materials” entered into the construction of Duckworth’s products. He also employed a “first-class tailoress” to do repair work, an important adjunct to the enterprise in the days when suits and coats, for economic reasons in many cases, were not casually discarded. Reflecting the transition from individually-made clothing to items that were mass-produced, Duckworth’s also carried “a carefully selected stock of gentlemen’s furnishing goods” including dress and negligee shirts, collars, cuffs, hosiery, and hats. This tailor shop was to have a long history in Bridgewater, but the next time it appears in our story Duckworth will be operating his business on the eastern side of Central Square in the new extension of the Elwell Block, situated immediately south of what had become known as the Bridgewater Inn.<sup>42</sup>

The history of this hostelry, one of Bridgewater’s leading service enterprises in 1900, is intriguing and, in a sense, predates that of the town’s two oldest stores, Hooper & Co. and Crane & Burrill, also occupants of the northern part of Central Square. In 1827, Capt. Abram Washburn, one of the town’s leading citizens, who, among other activities, was involved in the manufacturing of cotton gins and the creation of the town’s Common, moved an old house from East Bridgewater to Bridgewater. This structure became the front part of an inn located on the northeastern part of Central Square, close to where the first building of the Bridgewater Academy had been razed by fire in 1822. It must have been a sight to behold this house, itself built from the timber of a 1725 manse, as it was transported in halves southward on the Boston-New Bedford turnpike (now Route 18) constructed in 1805-6, during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson. Most likely the inn was originally called the Washburn Tavern, but took on different names with the coming of new proprietors in the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

In its early years, this hostelry prospered, in good measure by providing accommodations for the

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<sup>42</sup> BI, March 15, May 3, 1890, Dec. 14, 1895, Jan. 20, 1899, Nov. 2, 16, 1900, Feb. 22, 1924; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>43</sup> Crane, p. 818; Mrs. E. B. Hull, “Bridgewater in 1835,” HH, pp. 216-223; written around 1908 and found among the effects of Joshua E. Crane, Jr., this source is quoted at length in the HH; BI, March 4, 1910; “Brockton



horses and travelers of the stagecoach line using the turnpike. With the coming of the railroad to Bridgewater in 1846, however, many of the inn's sojourners and town inhabitants began to use this new mode of transportation. The addition of a third floor to the hotel that year was indicative of the good times Bridgewater was then experiencing, with a new Town Hall, a new sanctuary for the town's Unitarians, the Normal School building (the first of its kind in the United States), and the expanding iron works off of High Street. In the middle years of the nineteenth century, the inn was known "for its ability to meet the needs of the thirsty ones," and its yard was filled "with teams from far and near," especially on a Saturday night. Exterior improvements after the Civil War, such as the addition of piazzas to each floor, added to the aesthetic nature of the structure. Known as the Hyland House beginning in the 1870's, L. Dow Monroe, its proprietor in 1884, informed the public that the inn "has, this season been thoroughly refitted, refurnished, and supplied with all the appointments of a first-class hotel." But in 1888, when Bridgewater joined other surrounding communities in not granting liquor licenses, Monroe decided not continue in the hotel business. Evidently this town action did not bother Simeon Mitchell who, as the new proprietor, proceeded in "making extensive alterations and improvements in the house." Perhaps the introduction of piped water from the town's new water system was the change most appreciated by the inn's patrons. A year later, the town meeting voted to grant liquor licenses and, "Landlord Monroe" was once again the inn's proprietor. Quite a number of improvements were made to the old hostel. Business was "very brisk" and with so many regular boarders that there was "little room for transients."<sup>44</sup>

The last decade of the nineteenth century was hardly the most noteworthy time in the Inn's long history, however. For one thing, after the town in 1891 began a long tradition of voting against liquor licenses, no alcoholic beverages could be legally served at its Central Square hotel. Making matters worse for proprietor Monroe, he was also "refused a billiard table license...." In early August of 1892, the "two front door-posts" of the inn bore signs reading "Hotel Closed." Transients would no longer be accommodated and, according to an historical account written in 1910, only two residents continued to

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Enterprise, July 17, 1924," Pictorial History, 1987, p. 7; HH, p. 141; Townscape Institute, Form 56, pp. 181-182.  
<sup>44</sup> BI, Jan. 11, April 4, May 2, 30, 1884, May 1, 1886, March 10, 24, 1888, July 6, 1889; Crane, p. 818; HH, pp. 225, 227, 230; Townscape Institute, Form 56, pp.181-182; at one time there was some anticipation that Daniel Webster, who died in 1852, would stay at the inn during a visit to Bridgewater, but evidently was persuaded instead to accept an invitation from Nahum Stetson to sojourn at his Summer Street home.

board at the inn -- S. Lorin Keith, associated with the Bridgewater Savings Bank, and Dr. George H. Watson. The same account went on to comment that the inn might have been closed altogether had not the owners decided it was cheaper to keep it open than to pay the higher insurance rates that an unoccupied building would incur. Thanks to changes in ownership and proprietorship, prospects for the hotel brightened in late 1892 and 1893, with this venerable establishment even acquiring a new name -- The Bridgewater Inn. But the hotel's reputation was tarnished again in 1894, with its proprietor of less than a year skipping town with "a number of outstanding bills" and the Independent declaring that "for some time," the inn had "been nothing but grog shop." In late 1895, on the other hand, the guests at S. Lorin Keith's whist party were reportedly "delighted with appearance of the hotel, and with the service rendered." And in the late 1890's, the Inn's occupancy rate was a bit better, with five or six boarders calling it home. Notwithstanding its ups and downs, most townspeople by the end of the nineteenth century most likely could not have imagined Bridgewater without its elegant hostelry. Some of the older inhabitants knew that for almost three-quarters of a century it had silently watched as Central Square's lovely trees and modest, but pleasing, edifices came into being.<sup>45</sup>

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, George J. Alcott, a rather dapper looking man, who hailed from Chelsea, Massachusetts, became the new proprietor of the Bridgewater Inn. In an ad of early 1899, he described the establishment as "an old fashioned house, but like an old shoe is comfortable," going on to say that "regular boarders are desired." Perhaps some patrons could not resist the lure of dinner for thirty-five cents and breakfast and supper for ten cents less. Even though Alcott was only at the start of a long and successful stay in his new position, it was soon apparent that the Inn was in for positive changes, not only in its facilities, but also in the number of transient patrons and permanent boarders. A new coat of paint in October of 1900 prompted the Bridgewater Independent to assert, perhaps with some exaggeration, that the Inn could "rank with any hotel in this part of the country." In the week before Christmas, a new steam heating system was installed, adding to the comfort of those staying at the Inn during the cold New England winter. Changes in this establishment were not the only concerns Alcott had at this time. From the beginning of his entrepreneurial life in Bridgewater, he played, paradoxically, the leading role among those few in Bridgewater who advocated socialism as a

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<sup>45</sup> BI, Aug. 6, Sept. 17, Oct. 29, 1892, Jan. 14, 21, Aug. 27, Sept. 9, 16, Oct. 28, Dec. 16, 1893, July 7, 1894,

political response to the inequalities of the new industrial society, not always a popular political stand in a conservative Republican town.<sup>46</sup>

About the time Alcott took over the running of the Bridgewater Inn, it appeared that the town was about to get another “hotel.” In late January 1900, it was announced that Frank D. Barr had purchased the boarding house property of a Miss Knowles on Hale Street, which runs between Broad and Plymouth Streets, near the railroad tracks adjacent to the town’s industrial area. Actually, Barr did not become the owner of the property until the spring of 1903, but began running the establishment immediately. He refurnished the fourteen rooms in the house, and it was predicted that his “guests will receive the benefit of his knowledge, which will make his table first-class in every respect.” This assertion proved to have some validity. On February 20, 1900, Barr hosted a “sumptuous course dinner” for the “guests of the house and a number of his friends” to formally celebrate the Hotel’s opening. The roasted turkey, the elegant floral decorations, and the playing of whist all added to the enjoyment of the evening, with Barr receiving “many hearty wishes of success...” Why the name of the business was changed to the Bradford House by 1903 is not clear, but what is clear is that Barr continued to make major interior and exterior improvements in his property.<sup>47</sup>

These two establishments, especially the Bridgewater Inn, were prominent parts of the town’s landscape, but the lives of most people were effected more by a host of less conspicuous service businesses, many of which involved horses. In a charming reminiscence of his childhood in late nineteenth century Boston, Samuel Eliot Morison, the Nestor of American Historians until his death in 1977, vividly described the important role of horses in the life of the State’s capital before the coming of the automobile. The same observation could be made about Bridgewater at the turn of the century. Even though its population had not quite reached six thousand, almost 500 horses were assessed for tax purposes in 1900, compared to ninety-three in 2000, when the town’s population was close to 25,000.<sup>48</sup>

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April 13, Oct. 19, 1895, Jan. 20, 1899, March 4, 1910, Feb. 22, 1924; Little, “Wreath of Memories.”

<sup>46</sup> BI, June 15, Oct. 26, Dec. 21, 1900, March 4, 1910; Pictorial History, 1987, p.7; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 75; Bridgewater Book; Townscape Institute, Form 56, pp. 181-182; “Alcott, George J., --Hotel proprietor,” HH, p. 255; Harold Goodnough, “Bridgewater about 1910,” HH, p. 232.

<sup>47</sup> BI, July 2, 1895, Jan. 26, Feb. 23, 1900, May 6, 1903; “Ten Years Ago,” BI, Feb. 11, 1910; Bridgewater Book; a short news item found in the Bridgewater Independent on July 2, 1895 might give a clue to the name Bradford House when it reports: “An addition is being built to the boarding house on Hale street. The building is owned by Mr. Bradford Braley of Brockton.”

<sup>48</sup> “Report of the Assessors,” Annual Town Report, 1900, pp. 38-39; Wilfred L. Prouty, “Report of Inspector of Animals,” Annual Town Report, 2000, p. 109.

While many horses were used on the town's farms and for personal transportation, a good number of them were used in the service sector of Bridgewater's economy. Between 1865 and 1883, Francis D. King, who had come to Bridgewater from Mansfield, Massachusetts, in 1853, operated a livery stable to the rear of the Masonic Block, but then purchased from Calvin Estes the business and stock of the stable associated with the Hyland House on the eastern side of Central Square. In early November of 1886, King increased the capacity of his enterprise by adding to it the old stable of the near-by Washburn estate. In its heyday, King's facility had the capacity to board forty horses and, in addition, rented hacks and coaches for funerals. For anyone interested in hosting a sleighing party, King "purchased a large four-horse sleigh barge" with enough "comfortably upholstered" seats for thirty passengers. After "a long and painful illness," he passed away in July of 1896, not long before trolleys and, then automobiles, began to compete with horse-drawn forms of transformation. A year after King's death, Benjamin F. Ellis, the proprietor of the Taunton stage route whose grocery and grain store in the Scotland had "burned to the ground in early 1895, opened a "boarding, feed, and sale stable" in King's old barn in the rear of Churchill's dry goods store.<sup>49</sup>

Also close to the hostelry was the Bridgewater & Boston Express, additionally known as the Bowman & Perkins Express by the late 1870's. In 1880, this firm's proprietors "added to the rolling stock of their business a new team-horse, wagon, etc., --with a competent driver at the Boston end of their line," thus completing "arrangements" to insure "promptness and reliability to their patrons." Shortly thereafter, Joseph A. Bowman became the company's sole proprietor, but was aided in the business by Charles Burrill. To transport packages between Boston and Bridgewater the business used the railroad, but to deliver them locally horse-drawn wagons were still being used at the turn of the century. The McNeeland Brothers, general contractors, also employed horses in its heavy conveying business; in 1900 this outfit was especially busy in heavy teaming between the Bridgewater iron works and Taunton. Scattered throughout the town, blacksmith shops serviced the horses of these businesses, as well as those belonging to individuals. Among these shops were Southworth Harlow's on Broad Street, Eugene V. Tyler's on Spring Street and that of H. R. Bailey, who purchased the blacksmith shop of C. A. McLellan on Spring Street in late 1899. Bailey also "established a reputation for fine workmanship" in building

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<sup>49</sup> BI, Sept. 2, 1880, April 4, 1884, June 27, 1885, Jan. 14, 1888, Jan. 10, 1891, Jan. 26, 1895, Aug. 6, 20, 1897, July



**F. D. King Livery, Hack and Boarding Stable**  
Central Square (beside Inn)

Pictorial History, 1994, 72.

and repairing wagons. Many horse owners, it should be noted, relied on the fine harness workmanship of Joshua W. Gibbs, who in 1897 moved his shop from Broad Street to the facility in back of the Bridgewater Inn, formerly used by King. Even the undertaking business of Prophett & Flynn relied on horse power, purchasing “a magnificent pair of finely matched black horses for use on their hearse.” Various delivery wagons were also dependent on horses, while the town rented teams from private stables to aid in cleaning, repairing, constructing, and plowing its streets. Beginning in the 1880’s and continuing until the mechanization of the town’s fire department thirty years later, horses from private stables were sometimes employed to get volunteers and equipment to the fire scenes more quickly. Suppliers of feed for horses, such as the one operated by Benjamin F. Ellis on Pleasant Street in the Scotland section of Bridgewater, also contributed to the configuration of service enterprises that relied on horses.<sup>50</sup>

The need for insurance, legal council, and real estate information contributed to the growing number of service enterprises in Bridgewater. Reflecting a national trend in the late nineteenth century, more inhabitants of the town became conscious of fire, accident, and even life insurance. The insurance business of Lewis G. Lowe, who graduated from Harvard Medical College in 1864, was founded around 1870, making it “one of the pioneer firms” in Bridgewater and the surrounding area. On November 1, 1887, the firm became known as Lewis G. Lowe & Son when Gustavus J. Lowe, whose young wife had died the previous year, was taken into partnership with his father. With offices in Boston and Bridgewater, the Lowes, acting as agents for number of insurance companies, including the Hingham Mutual Fire Insurance Company and the Aetna Insurance Co. of Hartford, Connecticut, offered an array of insurance services. As previously mentioned, Thomas W. Crocker started his real estate insurance

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11, 1896, May 7, 1897, Crane, p. 796; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 15; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 72.

<sup>50</sup> BI, Sept. 9, 1880, Jan. 11, 25, Feb. 15, May 16, 1884, June 6, Sept. 12, 1885, Nov. 6, 1886, April 16, 1887, April 1, 1888, Jan. 10, Feb. 7, July 18, 1891, March 23, April 6, Aug. 17, Dec. 21, 1895, Feb. 15, June 20, Sept. 4, 1896, Aug. 6, Sept. 17, 1897, Feb. 18, 1898, Feb. 2, March 9, Dec. 21, 1900, May 24, Nov. 22, 1901, Sept. 25, 1914, Feb. 22, 1924, Jan. 9, Nov. 20, 1925; Bridgewater Book; History of the Old Colony Railroad, p. 373; Tales Around the Common, p. 5; Pictorial History, 1987, p.16; Townscape Institute, Form 56, pp. 181-182; Calvin Estes came to Bridgewater from Hanson, Massachusetts, in the 1870’s to become the proprietor of the Hyland House; it appears that his house on Summer Street, which later was occupied by his daughter Mrs. Jessie M. Ford, had been the residence of Artemas Hale, who served in the Massachusetts General Court and the United States House of Representatives; among other contributions to the town, Hale played an important role in getting the Normal School located in Bridgewater; since the house at 21 South Street in Bridgewater was long associated with Bowman, it might be noted that he bought this property in May of 1884 from Reverend Theodore F. Wright of the New Jerusalem Church; while retaining the local management of his express company, Bowman in 1891 consolidated his business with the New York & Boston Dispatch Express Co. to avoid being “crowded to the wall” by this big company which

business in the late 1880's. Between 1898 and his death in 1913, his office was in the Independent Block. This structure had served as his stable before being moved in 1897 to the front of his property between the Odd Fellows and Masonic buildings and "converted" into a commercial building. Extolling Massachusetts law in regard to insurance law, C. Arthur McLellan, another insurance agent in Bridgewater, urged clients not to "overlook the features of the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co. Policy." McLellan operated out of the offices of two Central Square law firms, Hosea Kingman and Sweet & Folsom.<sup>51</sup>

A native of Bridgewater, Kingman by early 1900 had been practicing law in the town for over thirty years, first as part of the firm of Latham and Kingman, which had quarters in the old Carver-Washburn building on Summer Street, and on his own beginning in 1871. He became the owner of this block and was soon widely known and respected as a first class lawyer, serving as a competent District Attorney in Southeastern Massachusetts and a City Solicitor for the City of Brockton. Writing in 1896, the Bridgewater Independent opined that Kingman "has for some time deservedly held the reputation of being one of the ablest barristers of the Plymouth bar." He also contributed to the social, civic, and business life of the town. Among other activities, he was a trustee of the Bridgewater Savings Bank and the Bridgewater Academy, and for three years was the Master of Fellowship Lodge, the town's Masonic organization. His untimely death in late March of 1900, caused by complications of pneumonia, was, in the words of the Bridgewater Independent, "a sad blow...and his loss will be felt for many years to come." Fortunately for many clients of his large practice, Attorney F. A. Hammond, who had read law in Kingman's office, decided to remain permanently in Bridgewater to carry on the practice.<sup>52</sup>

Clients of Kingman also had the option of switching their business to Sweet & Folsom, a

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made "a contract with the Old Colony [railroad] for the whole express business on the entire line."

<sup>51</sup> BI, Jan. 11, 1884, Feb. 13, 1886, Nov. 5, 1887, Jan 12, 1889, May 3, 1890, July 18, 1891, Jan. 7, June 10, 1893, March 17, 1894, Jan. 26, Nov. 16, 1895, June 20, 1896, May 14, 28, 1897, Feb. 18, 1898, March 9, 25, May 4, June 1, Dec. 14, 1900, Oct. 11, 1907, Feb. 14, 1913, April 12, 1918; Crane p. 809; Bridgewater Book; Townscape Institute, Form 158, pp. 385-386; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 82; in the 1870's and 1880's, Lewis G. Lowe occupied the house on the corner of South and Pleasant Streets, now the Bridgewater Nursing Home; it had been built around 1845 for Dr. Abram T. Lowe; L. G. Lowe moved to Boston in the middle 1890's, but the insurance company founded by him continued to do business in Bridgewater for another twenty years or so; it might be noted that Crocker and his family moved from Central Square into a new home on Spring Hill Avenue (Their section of this Avenue became Maple Avenue.) about the same time his barn was remodeled into the Independent Block.

<sup>52</sup> BI, July 12, Sept. 12, 1885, June 12, 1886, March 24, 1888, March 23, Nov. 9, 1889, Jan. 11, 1890, May 23, Dec. 4, 11, 1896, April 6, May 18, 1900; Crane, p. 796; Tales Around the Common, p. 38; Kingman and his family lived in the house on the corner of South and Grove Streets, which later became a funeral home; evidently, he also maintained a residence in Boston.

partnership formed in 1899, with offices in Bridgewater and Brockton. Frank E. Sweet, a native of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and graduate of Brown University, had been practicing law in Bridgewater since the middle 1880's, in the block on the eastern side of Central Square, later owned by Albert J. Elwell and, beginning in 1910, Joseph A. Bowman. In addition to helping develop a wide practice for this partnership, Sweet acted as an attorney for the Bridgewater Savings Bank. Conscious of his civic duties, he also served on the town's school committee and was an active member of the Old Bridgewater Historical Society. George W. Folsom was born in Bridgewater, studied law with Benjamin W. Harris, a highly respected judge in the area, and was admitted to the Plymouth County bar in 1888. The selling and buying of property involved legal services, but it appears that the growth of the real estate business per se intensified just after 1900 and will be discussed fully in the section dealing with the years 1901 to 1910. It has been pointed out in the section on agriculture in 1900, however, that two agencies, Chapin's and Leland's dealt not only with farming property, but also with residences and house lots in town.<sup>53</sup>

Some service enterprises might be classified under the category of "Keeping Up Appearances," to steal the title of a late twentieth century British television comedy. For a number of years after he opened his barber shop on Main Street in 1855, William H. Reiser, a native of Wurttemberg, Germany, ran the only such business in Bridgewater. Remaining only a short time at his original location, he moved to the Keith Block in Central Square, where by 1900 he had been cutting hair for over forty years. Making his home on Spring Hill Avenue, he became a well-known citizen of the town, attending the New Jerusalem Church, holding the distinction of being one of the oldest members of Fellowship Lodge, and operating most likely the oldest service enterprise in Bridgewater. Belying any thought of retiring, he had his shop "repapered and repainted in a most attractive manner," perhaps anticipating many more years in business. But the days of a one-barber-shop town had passed. Richard Casey, it will be recalled, was in the barbering business before he started his "variety" store in 1897. In the following year, Charles Bidmead, after working in Reiser's shop for four years, had gone into business for himself in the nearby Odd Fellows block. Also taking advantage of space in this new building, Henry Taylor, a barber of Boston, decided to relocate to Bridgewater in the fall of 1897. (It might be noted that Bridgewater had about a dozen barbers in the early 1920's). Whatever barber shop one patronized in 1900, it was a good

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<sup>53</sup> BI, Feb. 25, 1888, Jan. 12, Nov. 23, 1889, Feb. 15, 1896, Feb. 24, 1922; "Frank E. Sweet," Bridgewater Book;



place to reinforce one's knowledge of the local goings-on, perhaps garnered in conversations at the nearby post office.<sup>54</sup>

Following a visit to a barbershop was most likely a propitious time to make a call at the photography studio of Charles H. King. While not the first to set up this type of service in the Keith Block on Central Square, King, a native of Vermont, came to Bridgewater from nearby Whitman in 1895, to take over the studio of Leslie H. Harlow. After a short occupancy of a tenement on Hale Street, he and his family occupied a house on Mt. Prospect Street, recently vacated by H. A. Clark, the jeweler, whose business was also in the Keith Block. King soon became well-known for his fine portraits of individuals and families, working especially well with children. In his first year or so in Bridgewater, he became the "official" photographer of the graduating classes of the Normal and High Schools. To let passersby know of his "artistic" efforts, King had a show window built in front of his studio. In any case, by the turn of the century he was recognized as the town's leading photographer.<sup>55</sup>

Having clean and pressed clothes was also a requirement for keeping up one's appearance. For many women in Bridgewater, as was the case in other American communities, this meant facing the drudgery each Monday of doing the family laundry, which was done by hand before the introduction of electric washing machines. For some of the more affluent families in the town, this service undoubtedly was performed by a domestic, who, in some cases, might have been employed just to do this weekly task. By the late nineteenth century, however, commercial laundries became to be patronized by a broad spectrum of the town's inhabitants, including, most likely, some of the industrial workers who by 1900 made up the largest segment of the workforce.

While some Bridgewater proprietors of commercial businesses, including W. H. Reiser, the barber, acted as agents for laundries located in larger communities such as Taunton and Brockton, town establishments performing laundry services on their premises in the 1890's were run by Bridgewater's miniscule Chinese population, which, owing to the discriminatory Chinese Exclusion Act, passed by the

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"George W. Folsom," Bridgewater Book; "Folsom, George W., Jr.,--Lawyer," HH, p. 264.

<sup>54</sup> BI, Feb. 8, 1884, Sept. 12, 1885, July 18, 1891, Oct. 28, 1893, March 2, 1895, March 28, 1896, May 14, 21, Oct. 22, 1897, Aug. 17, 1900, Feb. 27, Sept. 4, 1903, May 20, 1904, Feb. 22, 1924.

<sup>55</sup> BI, Sept. 12, Oct. 10, 1885, Feb. 9, April 14, 1888; May 18, 1889, July 18, Oct. 24, 1891, Jan. 7, 14, 1893, March 24, 1894, Sept. 7, 14, Oct. 19, Dec. 21, 1895, Feb. 15, April 4, Dec. 4, 1896, Jan. 15, Oct. 22, 1897, Jan. 20, 1899, Crane, p. 796; this last source cites H. N. Robinson as the photographer in Central Square in 1884, but evidently he moved to Brockton where he continued in this field; "Charles H. King, Bridgewater's Up-To-Date Photographer,"

United States Congress in 1882, was not to expand to any extent for many years to come. Following reports in May of 1889 that two Chinamen had visited Bridgewater looking for a place to start a laundry service, one of them by the name of Yee Sing opened up such an enterprise in August on Broad Street, in a building recently vacated by Cuzner, the plumber. For the first three years, Sing remained at this location, using “a room partitioned off...as a sleeping room.” Hopefully more than his patrons took note of the beautiful Chinese lily in his window that bloomed at Christmas time or heard “some fine examples of Chinese flute playing” the following June. Sing’s trade was prosperous enough to allow him in late 1892 to move to larger quarters in a building, also on Broad Street, which had been recently occupied by Sherman and Wheeler’s market. In late summer of 1897, a “Tom Sing” began operating a laundry on Broad Street in quarters used by Gibbs, the harness maker, before he moved to King’s old station behind the Bridgewater Inn. At this point in my research, I do not know whether or not this new laundry took over the business run by Yee Sing. In any case, Tom Sing’s male patrons must have been pleased to get “a shirt and a pair of cuffs laundered...for 10 cents.”<sup>56</sup>

Toward the end of the decade, it is not surprising that Chinese laundries were also established in Central Square proper. In late December of 1897, the Tom Sing Laundry, with Charlie Louie as its proprietor, opened up an office on the western side of Central Square in the Cushman building, situated between the Tory House and the Masonic Block. While clothes could “be left and called for there,” it appears that the actual laundering continued to be done at the Broad Street location. In advertising this business change, the Tom Sing Laundry stressed its low prices and that all the work was done by hand, with no chemicals involved. In March of 1898, Bridgewater’s inhabitants learned that another Chinese laundry was being started, when Samuel and George Lee announced the opening of the Central Square Laundry in Thomas W. Crocker’s “new” building between the Masonic and Odd Fellow Blocks. Work, including family washing, would be done by hand and no chemicals would be used. Appealing to aesthetic nature of its patrons, the front part of this establishment was to be a “tea and Oriental store.” The Lees were to be the proprietors of this laundry until 1907.<sup>57</sup>

Keeping up the exterior of one’s house or commercial establishment was also a consideration for

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Bridgewater Book; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 21; Hal Goodnough, “Bridgewater About 1910,” HH, p. 233.

<sup>56</sup> BI, May 4, 25, Aug. 17, Sept. 7, Nov. 23, Dec. 7, 1889, April 26, 1890, Oct. 31, 1891, April 2, Aug. 6, June 25, Dec. 10, 1892, Oct. 28, 1893, April 13, 1895, Aug. 20, Sept. 3, 1897; Diner, A Very Different Age, pp. 85, 256.

many property owners in Bridgewater. By the 1880's, rather than do painting themselves, many such citizens had it done by the Braman Bros., a partnership formed by John G. and Henry F. in 1851, two years after the former had driven "over the road from Providence in a buggy" to make his home in the small town of Bridgewater with its population of around 2700. In 1885, after being located on Broad Street for many years, the Bramans moved their painting business to the rear of the Masonic building and the Cushman's shoe store in Central Square, evidently displacing the carriage and sign painting enterprise of Edward Brown, who, interestingly enough, relocated his business to Broad Street to the paint shop vacated by the Bramans. Their new quarters were located on what was soon dubbed Central Court, but this passageway leading to King's old stable was still legally known as Mechanic's Court. In any case, shortly after occupying their new quarters, the Bramans were busy painting the Academy Building, which since the middle of the 1870's had housed Bridgewater's public high school. By 1900, Braman Bros. was among the oldest service enterprises in Bridgewater. In addition to house painting, this partnership also sold "Paints, Oils, Varnishes, ... Window Glass" and "paper hangings," all of which were neatly and tastefully displayed in a "little store" in their newly acquired building. Both brothers were getting on in years as the new century arrived, but their business was still prospering and easily reached by both, John G. from his "handsome Italianate house," near the corner of Main and Oak Streets, and Henry F. from his "charming Greek Revival cottage" on Mt. Prospect Street. As we shall shortly see, however, their venerable outfit was to survive only a few years after 1900.<sup>57</sup>

Another retail-service enterprise that began to improve the appearance and durability of many houses in Bridgewater in the late nineteenth century was the one run by Henry G. Prophett. Aptly described as a "real estate speculator/builder/metal shingle dealer," Henry was the younger of two sons of William Prophett, the undertaker and furniture builder and dealer whose business, as we have seen, was located in the Fairbanks-Prophett building next to the Town Hall. After his death in 1897, his elder son, William S., who was chosen as Bridgewater's first Chief of the Fire Department when the town made

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<sup>57</sup> BI, Jan. 18, Nov. 12, 19, Dec. 24, 1897, Jan. 21, March 4, 25, 1898.

<sup>58</sup> BI, Jan. 11, Feb. 15, 1884, June 6, April 18, May 2, 23, July 4, 1885, Jan. 16, Dec. 18, 1886, April 6, 1889, July 18, 1891; March 21, 28, 1902, July 9, 1909, Jan. 5, 1912; Jan. 9, Feb. 22, 1924; when John G. Braman first arrived in Bridgewater, he worked for Thomas Hooper and James S. Allen, two of the leading painters of the area at that time; Thomas Hooper's son Arthur built and ran a paint shop for a number of years in the building to which the Braman brothers moved to in 1885; Crane, p. 796; Bridgewater Book; Atlas of Plymouth Country, 1903; Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. 1, p. 819; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 56; Townscape Institute, Form 48, pp. 159-160, Form

fire-fighting a public service in 1894, continued as the funeral director in the family concern, with the assistance of John E. Flynn. Why Henry failed to join his older brother in the family business I do not know, but there is some evidence that their relationship in the years to follow was not close. In any case, by the late 1880's Henry was already involved in constructing Workers Houses on Bedford and Union Streets and Maple Avenue. By the early 1900's, he and his family were occupying the "commodious Queen Anne house" on 107 Bedford Street, where it still captures the eyes of passersby. Mostly likely, some strollers of over a century ago took note of the Walter's Metal Shingles used by Prophett as roofing material for the houses he built. With Joseph A. Bowman of School Street among his first customers, Prophett decided in 1897 to go into the business of selling these shingles, an enterprise not only absorbing much of his entrepreneurial energy for the next quarter of century, but also one that would provide a visual legacy for Bridgewater, manifested in a number of metal (tin) roofs scattered throughout the town to this day.<sup>59</sup>

As important as keeping up the outside appearance of houses was the need to heat them since for over half of the year Bridgewater, like the rest of New England, generally had to endure the chilling temperatures of its northern climate. In the case of the town's industries, including those that manufactured shoes, iron products, and bricks, a source of energy to power the needed machinery was required all year round. Wood, especially pine and oak, was still available, but this source of fuel was continually declining as the area's forests were depleted. Thus, mirroring much of America at the turn of the century, Bridgewater relied greatly on coal to heat homes, retail businesses, churches, and some of its schools, and to provide a source of power for industrial activity, which by far was the most important element of its economy. For many years, coal was shipped from Fall River, via the Taunton River, to coal yards in Taunton and carted over the rough road to destinations in Bridgewater. After the Civil War, this pattern of transportation changed somewhat. Around 1870, Henry T. Pratt of Bridgewater created the town's first coal yard, located on Spring Street, and began to sell and distribute this important fossil

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116, pp. 305-306, Form 141, pp. 355-356; it might be noted that in 1911 Dorr's Print Shop moved into the former Braman's quarters off of Central Square

<sup>59</sup> BI, Feb. 19, March 25, 1904, July 8, 22, Aug. 12, 1921, March 24, 1922, Feb. 23, May 4, 1923; Townscape Institute, Form 19, pp.97-98, Form 20, pp. 99-100; Bridgewater Book; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 17; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 97; although I was not able to pursue this, I recall attending an historical lecture in Bridgewater at which, during the question and answer period, an elderly gentleman suggested that the two Prophett brothers were not on speaking terms; more concretely, the obituary of Henry G. Prophett (BI, May 4, 1923) did not

fuel to local customers. Some of the coal reaching Bridgewater at this point was evidently shipped by rail from Somerset, a town across the Taunton River from Fall River. In 1876, Pratt, who by this time had started his printing business, including the publication of Every Saturday, a weekly newspaper, soon to become the Bridgewater Independent, sold his coal business to Sumner Keith. This new owner was considered to be “one of the most prominent and substantial businessmen in Bridgewater,” having been the superintendent between 1860 and 1873 of Bates, Hyde and Co., a firm on Pearl Street noted for the manufacturing of cotton gins. Keith, whose home at 206 Main Street was one of the impressive residences on approaching Central Square, successfully operated his coal enterprise for over twenty-five years, “making quite an addition to his coal sheds” in 1885. Upon Keith’s death in the early 1900’s, his son Edwin, who had joined the business in 1890, became its proprietor. Five years later, the Keiths faced competition when Harry A. Wilber opened his coal yard on Park Avenue, not far from Plymouth Street.<sup>60</sup>

If coal from Keith’s yard warmed many houses during the winter months, flowers, shrubs, and plants from the greenhouses of Thomas Hooper and John J. Johnson brightened the lives of its customers on sad and joyous occasions throughout the year. Hooper’s enterprise, which dated back to the mid-nineteenth century, was located near his house on Spring Hill Avenue. Making “a specialty of cut flowers,” he was known over a large section of Plymouth County and took pride in delivering orders “at short notice.” In addition to being a life member of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, he took a keen interest in the history of Bridgewater, Plymouth County, and Massachusetts. He passed away in 1895 in his ninetieth year at the home of his daughter in nearby Elmwood, a section of East Bridgewater. Johnson, after operating his wholesale florist business for twenty-six years in Newton, Massachusetts, moved his enterprise, including the fixtures of his greenhouses, to Bridgewater in the early 1890’s. His brother Elias, a well-known builder in this town, was put in charge of erecting “new” hot houses. By the turn of the century, John J. was operating “eight greenhouses covered by 28,000 feet of glass.” Located off of Main Street, a short walk from Central Square, these structures were to the rear of a Queen Anne/Colonial Revival house, built for Johnson in the middle 1890’s on a lot of land purchased from A. S. Lyon, Bridgewater’s well-known builder and lumberman. While this residence is still a part of the

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mention that he had a surviving brother in Bridgewater.

<sup>60</sup> Crane, p. 793; BI, June 6, Dec. 4, 1885, Nov. 26, 1887, April 7, 1888, July 18, 1891, May 20, Sept. 17, Oct. 29, 1892, Nov. 24, Dec. 29, 1894, Jan. 5, Feb. 15, Nov. 2, 1895, Dec. 22, 1911; Townscape Institute, Form 115, pp.

“well-crafted collection of 19<sup>th</sup> c. houses” that grace one of Bridgewater’s most important thoroughfares, physical remains of the Johnson’s florist trade have not survived. One contemporary account averred, however, that Johnson was “one of the best known florists in this section of Massachusetts, not only supplying local needs, but, at the same time, shipping “most of his plants to Boston,” where there was “always an active demand for them.”<sup>61</sup>

Since the Bridgewater Independent, this writer’s most important primary source, carried the ads of many of the stores and services, it would be appropriate to conclude this part of our discussion with a word or two about this local newspaper. By 1900, it had been a news source for the citizens of the town for twenty-three years. could not claim, however, to be the “first” newspaper to be published in Bridgewater. This distinction is saved for an anti-Masonic sheet called “We the People,” which was published by Christopher A. Hack, for about two years in the 1830’s, in a building on Broad Street, located on the site where Rogers later conducted his hardware business. The origins of the Independent date from March of 1876, when Henry T. Pratt, who was then serving as Bridgewater’s Town Clerk and was just beginning his printing business, started to publish Every Saturday, a four-page local newspaper, selling for three cents a copy, or one dollar a year, to be paid in advance. With its business office located on the second floor of the newly-built Washburn Block in Central Square, the name of this new publication was renamed the Bridgewater Independent in December of its first year. Some of the history of this news source between 1877 and 1900, including its publishers, editors, locations, expanding size, changing news coverage, and connection to the East Bridgewater Star, is found in the accompanying footnote and need not detain us here, except to mention that in 1886 its office, located on Broad Street at the time, was badly damage by a fire, and that beginning in 1898 the paper was published in the “new” Independent Block on the western side of Central Square, next to the slightly newer Odd Fellows block. During the first decade of the twentieth century, as we shall see, the Bridgewater Independent would have two excellent editors, Pliny Jewell, until 1905, and then James H. Dickinson, who would remain at this post until the 1940’s.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> BI, May 22, 1886, March 6, 1890, May 23, Aug. 22, 1891, March 26, June 25, Sept. 24, 1892, Sept. 16, 1893, May 4, 25, Sept. 21, 1895, May 9, 1896, Jan. 20, 1899, Aug. 16, 1901; Townscape Institute, Form 111, pp. 295-296, Form 208, pp. 490-491.

<sup>62</sup> BI, March 4, 1884, July 17, 1886, May 21, 1892, Oct. 19, 1895, Feb. 5, Aug. 20, 1897, Jan. 17, 24, Feb. 11, 1898,

Important as publishing the Independent was distributing it among townsfolk, who, in an age that was still years away from radio and, even more so, from television and computers, relied on this paper to keep abreast of news, especially of a local nature. While most patrons received the newspaper through the mail, others purchased it in a number of commercial establishments, including both of Bridgewater's drug stores, Cole's and Wilcox's. In addition, there were newsstands that carried a variety of newspapers, not only the weekly Independent, but daily ones from such cities such as Brockton and Boston. Elmer C. Linfield, who took over the publication of the Independent in 1884, successfully operated such an enterprise on Broad Street. Walter King, one of the town printers, was also known for his newsstand on Broad Street during the middle 1890's. This enterprise perhaps drew more customers when a marble soda fountain was installed in April of 1895. In the following year, King disposed his business in daily and Sunday papers to R. J. Casey, who, as we have seen, sold them at his hair dressing rooms on Main Street and, beginning in 1897, at his waiting room and news depot near the junction of Broad and Summer Streets. Casey's would be Bridgewater's leading seller of newspapers in the first part of the twentieth century.<sup>63</sup>

### Stores in Bridgewater

#### 1901-1910

During the first decade of the twentieth century, the inhabitants of Bridgewater, including those in the outlying districts, continued to do the bulk of their shopping in or nearby Central Square, despite

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Jan. 20, 1899, July 10, 1908, Jan. 12, March 29, 1912; Crane, p. 819; "Pratt, Henry Thomas, 1836-1898--Newspaper publisher," HH, p. 275; E. B. Hull, "Bridgewater in 1835," HH, p. 223; HH, p. 180; Moore, Tales Around the Common, pp. 6-7; Bridgewater Book; for the benefit of the diligent reader, I quote at length the following account from the Bridgewater Independent, Jan. 20, 1899, (which, by the way, relied in part, upon Crane's account) concerning the first twenty-three years of this newspaper: "Mr. Pratt continued as editor and publisher for almost three years and was succeeded by the late Joseph Tooker, who continued to make a readable paper until 1884, when Mr. James M. Coombs of Middleboro became the proprietor. Mr. Coombs was at that time publisher of the Middleboro Gazette, and in less than a year the Independent had again changed hands. Mr. Elmer C. Linfield, being the purchaser. In March 1895, Miss A. G. Gardner purchased the business, and is now the publisher of the Independent. Mr. R. D. Dudley became editor of the paper in the fall of 1897. The Independent has had many homes during its twenty-three years of life. It was first located in Mr. Pratt's office in Library Place. During Mr. Tooker's ownership the office was on Pleasant street and afterwards on Main Street, in the building now occupied as a shoe store by Mr. Donovan. Mr. Linfield removed the office to Broad street and later to Brockton. When Miss Gardner became proprietor, the paper sought the home of its birth, and for nearly three years it was again located in Mr. Pratt's office. On Jan. 1, 1898, the plant was moved to its present quarters in Independent Building in Central Square.

The East Bridgewater Star was established by Mr. Tooker, and is published in connection with the Independent, whose fortunes it has since followed."

the fact that the “electrics,” the railroad, and the automobile made it increasingly possible to patronize retailers in such places as Brockton, Taunton, and Boston. Shoppers were able to secure goods and services on both sides of the Square and on the parts of Broad, Main, and Summer Streets nearest the northern end of the Common. The west side of the Square retained its popularity among retailers, owing to the location of the post office on the first floor of the Bank Building. The easterly side of the Square by late 1901, however, was “making a bid for the majority of the business of the town,” as stores filled the entire space from the Town Hall to the Bridgewater Inn. By the start of the new century, certain retail establishments, including Hooper & Co, Crane and Burrill, and Fairbanks had long been familiar to the town’s inhabitants. But in the ensuing decade, shoppers were to witness a number of changes in the retail configuration of the village center as some of these well-established enterprises underwent organizational changes, other stores closed, and new retail businesses made their debuts. Continuity and change also figured in the development of the neighborhood stores in the outlying districts of the town during the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>64</sup>

In general, Bridgewater’s retail businesses flourished in the early 1900’s, helped by the new age of consumerism in which Americans were buying more and more manufactured goods and processed foods. There were, however, some occasional dips in consumer spending, caused in good measure by developments over which local store owners had little control. The labor unrest in late 1906 at McElwain’s shoe factory on Perkins Street, the town’s largest employer, for instance, created some consternation among the hometown merchants, lest it reduce the buying power of the shoe workers. Conversely, store owners were encouraged in August 1908 by an increase in factory output in the town, following the uncertain economic conditions of the previous year in part associated with a national financial panic. Good times also meant steady employment for store employees who, among other tasks, waited on customers, stocked the store shelves with goods, or delivered purchases to the homes of the consumers. These workers were among the two-hundred and fifty inhabitants of Bridgewater classified as being involved in trade occupations by the 1905 Census of Massachusetts. As of that year only thirty of them were female, but if national statistics are any guide, the percent of women involved in sales

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<sup>63</sup> BI, March 4, May 2, 1884, March 15, 1890, May 23, 31, 1891, Oct. 28, 1893, June 9, 1894, March 23, April 13, Dec. 21, 1895, March 28, 1896, April 4, Oct. 16, 1896, Aug. 6, Oct. 22, 1897.

<sup>64</sup> BI, Nov. 22, 1901, April 6, 1906.



employment in Bridgewater would increase considerably by 1920. Although my research is still sketchy on the ethnic and gender makeup, the working conditions, and the wages of those who were employed in the town's stores, hopefully comments here and there in the following narrative will shed some light on these topics.<sup>65</sup>

The entrepreneurs of the town's retail and services establishments understood the need to take steps to secure and enhance their businesses. Most of them advertised their products and services in the town's two weekly newspapers, the Bridgewater Independent, a quarter of a century old by the early 1900's, and its young competitor, the Bridgewater Advertiser. The latter started to be published just after the turn of the century by Arthur H. Willis, who had learned the printing trade under Henry T. Pratt and went on to become the printer of the town's Annual Reports for many years. At first, Pliny Jewell, the editor of the Independent, although seeing no need for two newspapers in Bridgewater, was "prepared to live and let live and did not in any way interfere with the success" of his younger competitor. Jewell simply continued to solicit "advertisements on the grounds of its (the Independent's) own worth, and not by contrast." This all changed in April of 1905 when certain unnamed merchants told the Independent that representatives of the Advertiser were claiming to have a larger circulation than its older and more established competitor. In a statement "To Advertisers," published in the Independent, Jewell challenge this claim, asserting that his newspaper had a circulation in Bridgewater twice that of the Advertiser. The controversy appears to have died down by the time James H. Dickinson took over the Independent in September of 1905. He immediately announced his intention of making his "advertising columns not merely profitable, but of real value to our readers as a medium for their guidance in business affairs." Louise Dickinson (Rich), the older daughter of the new editor, wondered in her memoirs, Innocence Under the Elms, how the town "supported two local weeklies" for so many years before eventually joining together under her father's leadership.<sup>66</sup>

There was a close symbiotic relationship in these years between the town's newspapers and

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<sup>65</sup> BI, Dec. 14, 1906, Aug. 14, 1908; Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. I, p. 336; Diner, A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era, pp. 168-171; most of Diner's comments on salesclerks deal with these workers in the department stores located in larger cities.

<sup>66</sup> BI, May 3, 1901, April 14, Sept. 29, 1905; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 118; "Dickinson, James H., 1866 to 1949--Newspaper publisher," HH, pp. 261-262; "Willis, the Printer and the Bridgewater Advertiser," Bridgewater Book; evidently this latter source was first printed by Willis and, as far as I can see, he made no reference to the Bridgewater Independent or its editors; this newspaper, however, was among the sponsors of the

retailers. Over and above carrying the ads of the town's merchants, the Independent, in a blend of provincialism, self-interest, and boosterism, periodically reminded the shopping public of the advantages of patronizing local businesses. "The benefits derived from bargain hunting in places other than one's home town are of a doubtful character while the disadvantages are decidedly prominent," this newspaper postulated around Easter time in 1906. Just consider, the Independent editorialized, the carfare and time used in traveling, never mind dealing with clerks who are strangers. While having a strong concern for the town's economic well-being, this newspaper naturally wanted to increase its circulation by carrying the ads of local merchants, the main source of its income. Dickinson Rich asserts that advertisers did not always pay "in the coin of the realm... for touting" their "wares in the Independent." Instead, a barter system allowed the Dickinson family to attain goods and services from such stores at Churchill's as a way of balancing accounts. Where an ad was placed said something about the relative importance of a particular store in the pecking order of the town's retailers. It is not surprising to see the ads of Hooper's general store, the retail establishment with the longest history in Bridgewater, always placed in the upper right-hand corner of the first page of the paper. As time went on, Fairbanks, a hardware store built in the 1860's opposite the eastern side of the Common, had its ads placed right above the personal column, perhaps the mostly widely-read section of this newspaper.<sup>67</sup>

While merchants in Bridgewater relied heavily on the weekly editions of the newspapers to advertise their regular line of goods, bargains and holiday products received special coverage, particularly in the two weeks before Christmas. The December issues of the Bridgewater Independent, especially the one just prior to Christmas, were enticing enough to attract even the most penurious consumer to frequent some of the brightly adorned stores in the village center. It was reported just before the Christmas of 1904 that the Independent, with one exception, "carried more advertising in its Christmas number than any weekly paper in southeastern Massachusetts." Willis's Bridgewater Advertiser also did its part in promoting local purchasing with its annual slogan: "Do your Christmas Shopping in Bridgewater." If some shoppers failed to read the newspapers, they could hardly have missed goods displayed in creatively decorated windows during the Yuletide season. In December of 1904, the Independent took time to

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"reprinting" of the Bridgewater Book-Illustrated in the 1980's; unfortunately, this writer has not been able to locate copies of the Bridgewater Advertiser.

<sup>67</sup> BI, April 6, Dec. 14, 1906; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 29.

describe the decorations in about fifteen of the stores in Central Square. For examples: “F. N. Churchill’s has the most elaborate Christmas tree in town, in one of his windows,” and “The Central Square Market has a tempting display of fine looking turkeys, arranged with laurel and holly.” Showing a bit more ingenuity, R. J. Casey’s displayed a “big doll” which was to be given away “to the person guessing when the watch,” in the window, “stops.”<sup>68</sup>

Advertising alone would not have lured the buying public to frequent the retail stores, most of which were located in and around Bridgewater’s Central Square. The local’s merchant’s strove throughout the decade to reach a consensus on what hours the stores should be opened to accommodate the shopping needs of the town’s inhabitants. Despite earlier negotiations among the merchants which led to an agreement to keep the stores open the last three nights of the week, a “go-as-you-please” approach prevailed in early 1901. Commenting on this situation, the Independent wrote that if a stranger settled in the town he would be “obliged to compile a table showing on what nights certain stores are open and on what nights they are closed.” Especially inconvenient and vexing at times to some citizens, including housewives, factory workers, and some inhabitants of the outlying districts, was the fact that the grocery stores were only opened on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings, while other stores also opened on Tuesday evening. It should be pointed out, however, that during the summer months the grocery stores were open every night of the week on “account of perishable stock and ...of people who cannot afford to buy ice...” A survey of all the merchants in town, conducted by the Independent in April 1901, indicated clearly that no consensus on the matter on evening openings existed. But the fact that the stores of the Central Square area were all open three or four nights a week is surely an indication of just how important the village center was to the shopping public. (A quick walk around this area a century later would find most retail shops closed every evening of the week.)<sup>69</sup>

While there were other suggestions about store hours, closing one afternoon a week, for instance, it was not until the business interests of the town began to organize in early 1906 that hopes to reach greater consensus on the matter of uniform openings and closings were considerably raised. In the middle of February, a well-attended meeting was held in King’s photography studio in the Keith Block.

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<sup>68</sup> BI, Dec. 23, 1904, Dec. 14, 1906, Dec. 27, 1907; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>69</sup> BI, April 5, 12, 1901; the report on this survey in the April 12th edition is an excellent overview of the retailers in the town’s center.

With Frank N. Churchill presiding, a committee was appointed to draw up a constitution for a Business Men's Association. Subsequent meetings, including those held in the nearby rooms of the Commercial Club and the Masonic banquet hall, completed the organizational process and added new members, some of whom were also active in the Commercial Club. In addition to hearing speakers, successfully promoting the town's first trade parade, and supporting the efforts for an Old Home Week in Bridgewater, this new organization turned its attention to the issue of night openings, soon making the recommendation that "all" lines of business be closed on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. Later in the year, however, prompted by McElwain's decision to pay its employees on Wednesdays, the Association thought it only prudent to urge all its members to stay open that night rather than on Tuesday evening. It cannot be said with certainty if all retailers complied, but one thing was apparent--merchants, even in a small New England town like Bridgewater, were learning that organization and co-operation were becoming key requirements for any segment of American society seeking its share of the benefits of the new industrial economy of the early twentieth century.<sup>70</sup>

Keeping in mind some of the general points in this introduction concerning the stores in Bridgewater between 1901 and 1910, let us see how individual enterprises fared, both those already established by 1900 and those created in the first decade of the twentieth century. Hooper and Co., the town's oldest retail endeavor, continued to play an important role in the overall trade of Central Square. Older patrons undoubtedly noticed some changes in the store's management and configuration of stock, however. Albert H., one of Avery's F. Hooper's sons, who had worked in his father's store since 1876 and had become a partner in the late 1880's, was really in charge of Hooper & Co. by the early 1900's, owing to the declining health of his father, who, nevertheless, continued to keep in close touch with the store's affairs until just before his death in 1912.<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps not quite as "general" a store has it had been in the nineteenth century, Hooper's continued in the early 1900's to do a brisk business, despite the competition of newer retail shops, which

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<sup>70</sup> BI, July 3, 1903, April 5, 1904, Feb. 9, 16, March 2, 16, April 6, 13, 20, Sept. 7, Nov. 16, 23, 1906, April 22, 1910; there is a substantial amount of historical study on the topic of organization as a factor in American life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; see, for instance, Robert H. Wiebe's The Search for Order, 1877-1920, 1967.

<sup>71</sup> BI, Sept. 27, 1912; Crane, p. 796; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 62; the description for the top picture in the latter source was mainly written by Benjamin A. Spence; "Hooper, Avery Fobes, 1887 [should be 1830] to 1912--Merchant," HH, p. 266; Pictorial History, 1987, pp. 8, 19, 21, 1994, p. 6; Tales Around the Common, p. 7; see previous section on "Hooper & Co.," pp.3-4; Bridgewater Book.

specialized in particular goods carried by general stores only as part of their overall stock. As its ads indicated, Hooper's continued to carry a plethora of goods on its two floors, including canned and fresh vegetables and fruits, cereals of all kinds, candies, drinks such as Moxie and Clicquot Club Ginger Ale, Sherwin Williams Paints, garden tools, grass seed, and feed for poultry, horses and cattle, to name only a few of its products. By its prominent ads on the front page of the Independent, "Old Reliable" tried to persuade shoppers that its business was the place to purchase all of their Christmas supplies and, at the same time, pick up "snow shovels, lanterns, axes, hatches, pocket knives, buck saws, coal scoops, dog chains, rat traps, coal hods, ash sifters...." Well-aware of Bridgewater's large Irish-Catholic population, Hooper & Co. knew the benefits of touting its large selection of canned fish during Lent and, in general, on Friday, the day on which the Independent was now published.<sup>72</sup>

Albert H. Hooper gave "his personal attention" to all aspects of his large business, which along with the nearby post office was a pleasant meeting place, perhaps reminding older citizens of the vanishing Bridgewater of the nineteenth century. A "force of courteous clerks" added to the firm's attractiveness during these years. One of them, David Moore, whose son, James, would become Bridgewater's Police Chief in 1919, was chosen in 1904 as the "Most the Popular Clerk" in Bridgewater in a contest sponsored by the Bridgewater Independent. Edmund L. Sinnott, the town treasurer, was a book keeper and cashier at Hooper's before resigning in 1908 to become a traveling salesman for a Boston mercantile house. It would appear that other than erecting a cashier's desk near one of the doors, no major structural changes were made to Hooper's store in the early 1900's, as had been done in the previous century. It was a new coat of outside paint in April 1904 that elicited the comment: "My! But Hooper's store looks better."<sup>73</sup>

The other "general" store in Bridgewater in the early 1900's was Crane and Burrill, located on the corner of Broad and Summer Streets, across from the northern end of the Common. Like Hooper's, this store had seen a number of changes in proprietorship and physical structure in its almost one hundred years of existence. Many town inhabitants surely remembered the years, beginning in 1848, when Joshua E. Crane owned and operated the store, and how after his death in 1888, one of his sons, Henry L., kept

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<sup>72</sup> BI, Jan. 7, 1893, Feb. 22, June 14, 1901, Jan. 17, July 18, Nov. 7, 1902, June 26, 1903, Feb. 19, Dec. 16, 1904, Feb. 10, 1905, April 6, Dec. 21, 1906, Dec. 20, 1907, Sept. 27, 1912; "Hooper & Co.," Bridgewater Book.

<sup>73</sup> BI, Aug. 6, Dec. 20, 1901, April 29, July 15, 22, Aug. 5, 1904; Tales Around the Common, p. 7.

the business going in partnership with Henry T. Burrill, who, by the way, was then working as a clerk in Hooper's. As indicated in our earlier discussion, Crane's and then Crane and Burrill's was also a meeting place where town citizens, especially older men, gathered to discuss the "news" of the day. While this second oldest store in town had some aspects of a general store, selling such items as farming tools, garden seeds, and dry goods, including towels and handkerchiefs, it appears that the variety of its stock was not as extensive or varied as Hooper's, and that groceries were more central to its business than was the case with its competitor across the way. One thing is sure, however, Crane & Burrill was to experience far greater changes in organization and physical facilities in the first decade of the twentieth century than the retail establishment with the longest history in Bridgewater.<sup>74</sup>

The first big change came in early 1902 and was succinctly described in the Independent as follows: "The old sign above the door of the old corner store is acting a lie. The firm of Crane & Burrill is no more, for on February 1<sup>st</sup> Henry L. Crane retired from the partnership, selling out his interest to H. T. Burrill, who will henceforth conduct the business alone." Crane did not retire to a life of leisure, however. His jobs as the town's clerk and treasurer, which he had held since the late 1880's, demanded his full attention and would "not permit" him "to engage in other business." So for the first time in over fifty years, this old country store, a landmark in Bridgewater, no longer bore the Crane name. But who could have predicted that on March 17, 1905, the Independent would be reporting the following: "Commits Suicide By Hanging-Henry L. Crane, Town Clerk and Treasurer, and Friend to Everyone, Takes His Own Life in Town Hall-No Reason Known for the Deed." To be sure, the Crane and Burrill partnership had been dissolved three years earlier, but it does seem a bit surprising that Henry Burrill was neither an usher nor bearer at his former partner's funeral at the Central Square Congregational Church. (This tragedy of Crane's death is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this study.)<sup>75</sup>

For the rest of the decade, the business was carried on under the name of Henry T. Burrill, with much of the stock remaining the same and groceries continuing to be all-important. Indeed, at times, its ads in the Independent used the title, Burrill's Grocery Store. There were, of course, some improvements made by Burrill. Customers in the summer of 1902 might have taken notice of the addition of "a new

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<sup>74</sup> BI, Jan. 7, 1893, Feb. 22, April 5, June 21, Nov. 29, 1901, Feb. 6, 1920; see the discussion of Crane and Burrill in the previous section.

<sup>75</sup> BI, Feb. 7, 1902, March 17, 24, 1905; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 63; the lower description in this

self computing weighing machine to his grocery equipment” and a fresh coat of paint to the exterior of the store. By 1906, as other retailers were doing, Burrill’s installed a telephone, making it convenient for housewives to call in their orders, that is, if they were among the few inhabitants at the time who owned this new form of communication. Some of the older families continued to trade at the store, making use of their charge accounts. The biggest change to this “general” store came in 1910, however.<sup>76</sup>

As part of the plan to straighten and widen the connection between Main and Summer Streets, the details of which are given in my essay on Bridgewater’s Highway Department in the early 1900’s, it was decided that Burrill’s would have to be relocated. While the Crane store had been set back an additional six feet to widen the street in the 1850’s, the change in 1910 was more dramatic since it involved the erection of a new building, to be known as the Estes Block. During the spring of 1910, plans for this two-floor business building, “located about fifteen feet easterly of the old location,” were drawn up, with the understanding that two large stores would occupy the ground floor. From the start, it was generally known that Burrill’s would have the space in the easterly part of the structure, placing this grocery’s entrance a bit more to the east on Summer Street. And, after considerable speculation, it was publicly announced on May 20 that R. J. Casey and Co. would be the other major retailer to locate in the new block; more about this later. In July, the McNeeland Bros. began moving the Burrill’s grocery, part of which dated back to 1804, further back from Summer Street. Burrill had planned to conduct his trade in the old building until the new one was completed, but, as it turned out, fitted up a retail space next to J. R. Callahan’s & Co., the Broad Street farm agents. By December, the new block was ready for occupancy and, shortly thereafter, Burrill took his son Harold, who had finished his education, into the enterprise. For the next ten years, the establishment would be known as H. T. Burrill & Son.<sup>77</sup>

Not as venerable as the two oldest stores in town, Fairbanks hardware and Prophett furniture and undertaking businesses, which jointly owned and occupied the commercial block adjacent to the Town Hall, were, nonetheless, well-established by 1901, continuing to serve the public after thirty-five years.

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last source was written by Benjamin A. Spence.

<sup>76</sup> BI, Feb. 22, 1901, July 18, Sept. 12, Oct. 24, Nov. 7, 1902, Jan. 9, June 26, Aug. 28, 1903, Jan. 20, 1905, April 27, 1906, Aug. 12, 1910, Dec. 8, 1911, Feb. 6, 1920; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 18, 1994, p. 6; the chronology under the picture in the last source appears to be incorrect since the change of name to Henry Burrill was not made until 1902.

<sup>77</sup> BI, May 20, June 17, July 1, 15, 1910, Feb. 22, 1924; Crane, p. 818; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 63; the description for the bottom picture in this last source was written by Benjamin A. Spence; the site of the 1910 Estes Block is now part of a parking lot serving a number of businesses.

Fairbanks's enterprise, occupying the northern section of the building, underwent a major reorganization in 1907, however. It was incorporated and officially became known as the "J. H. Fairbanks Co.," with Fairbanks as President, W. H. Bevan, Treasurer, and C. A. Benson, Secretary. With this property separation, each of the two owners of Fairbanks-Prophett commercial block paid separate taxes to the town. More than just an ordinary hardware store, Fairbanks continued to advertise Glenwood Ranges, became more and more involved in the selling and installation of modern bathrooms, and by 1907 was even soliciting orders for gas engines for either "Marine or Stationary" purposes.<sup>78</sup>

Fairbanks, actively involved in the business and civic life of the town, was, by all accounts, "an old fashioned businessman who believed in hard work." Conveniently for him, his house at forty-four South Street, a dwelling erected around 1825 and apparently first lived in by Holmes Sprague, was located just a short walk to Central Square. The Fairbanks had lived in this house since the early 1870's, but for some reason they temporarily closed the house in early January of 1910 and spent the rest of the winter at the Bridgewater Inn. In that year, John H. Fairbanks turned seventy-five years old, showed no signs of retiring from his business, and with William S. Prophett and John E. Flynn, his adjoining business neighbors, planned to erect a new display window facing the eastern side of the Common. Perhaps none of the patrons of this hardware store would have predicted that nineteen years later John H. Fairbanks would still be in charge of this hardware enterprise.<sup>79</sup>

From 1865 until his death in 1897, William Prophett, William S.'s father, had carried on his furniture, carpet, and undertaking businesses on the side of the block closest to the Town Hall. During all these years, he and Fairbanks, both born in England, managed to own the property jointly without any disagreements. When Prophett died, his son William S., who was then serving as the Fire Chief in Bridgewater, took over the business and by September of 1900 was "erecting a fine cottage house on Spring Hill Avenue." In the meantime, Prophett took John E. Flynn into the business, although it would appear that Flynn at this juncture was not an owner or full partner since the store continued to advertise its "Household Furniture of all kinds" under the name W. S. Prophett. Also, in the first decade of the

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<sup>78</sup> BI, Nov. 16, 1900, Feb. 22, Oct. 11, 1901, Aug. 28, 1903, April 12, 1907, Feb. 18, 1910; Crane, 796; Townscape Institute, Form 54, pp. 174-175; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 64; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 78, 80; "John H. Fairbanks Co.," Bridgewater Book.

<sup>79</sup> BI, Jan. 7, May 6, 20, 1910; Moore, "J. H. Fairbanks Co.," HH, p. 89; "Fairbanks, John Hassem, 1835 to 1929--Merchant," HH, p. 263; Townscape Institute, Form 213, pp. 501-502.



twentieth century Prophett was listed as a substantial taxpayer, with a tax bill close to \$300 in 1904 and \$550 in 1910, whereas Flynn, despite owning a house on Oak Street, was not listed among the “heavy taxpayers” until later in the decade when he paid taxes of about seventy-five dollars in 1910.<sup>80</sup>

In the summer of 1903, nonetheless, it was reported that “Prophett & Flynn have decided to close up their furniture and undertaking business at East Bridgewater, and devote their entire attention” to Bridgewater. Three years later, W. P. Prophett, a graduate of Massachusetts College of Embalming, became associated with his father and Flynn in the funeral part of the business. Like several enterprises in the town, Prophett and Flynn would make use of the automobile, but it appears that before 1910 they relied on fine black horses to pull their funeral hearse. The incorporation of Fairbanks in 1907, as we have seen, brought about the legal division of the property, but the cordial relations that had existed for so many years between these two establishments were to continue into the second decade of the twentieth century, as was the patronage of many Bridgewater inhabitants.<sup>81</sup>

After purchasing some hardware item at Fairbank’s or a piece of furniture at Prophett’s, it was easy enough to go next door to buy a pair of shoes at Robert Ferguson’s store. His enterprise dated back to 1879 and was originally located in the Willis building at 20 Main Street. Beginning in the middle 1880’s, however, Ferguson’s was to be found on the eastern side of Central Square in what was known at this time as the Mitchell Block, part of which, at least, dated back to the late 1860’s. The history of this commercial facility, which is still extant, is complicated and not completely clear to the present writer, with some evidence that it was at one point two separate structures. What is clear is that by the early 1900’s it had been owned by Albert J. Elwell for over a decade. Before moving to Brookline around 1905, he was one of Bridgewater’s most active businessmen for almost twenty years. In any case, Ferguson’s in the early 1900’s occupied that section of the Elwell block closest to Fairbanks hardware store.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> BI, Sept. 14, Nov. 16, 1900, Feb. 22, 1901, Aug. 5, 1904, Feb. 18, Aug. 12, 1910; “Prophett & Flynn Undertakers,” Bridgewater Book; “Prophett, William, 1834 to 1897--Merchant, funeral director,” HH, pp. 275-276; “Prophett, William Spiers, 1858 to 1932--Funeral director, Fire Chief,” HH, p. 276; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 55; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 78; Townscape Institute, Form 54, pp. 174-175.

<sup>81</sup> BI, July 24, 1903, Dec. 13, 1907; “Prophett and Flynn Undertakers,” Bridgewater Book; “Flynn, John E., 1866 to 1955--Funeral director,” HH, pp. 263-264.

<sup>82</sup> BI, Jan. 7, 1893, March 22, Aug. 16, 1901, Oct. 4, 1907, Sept. 23, 1910, Feb. 22, 1924; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 55; Townscape Institute, Form 55, pp. 178-179; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 83; the description for the top picture in this last source was written by Benjamin A. Spence; in the early twenty-first century, Gilbert’s Dance Studios of Dance Education occupies this premise at forty-six Central Square; Atlas of Plymouth County,

Between 1901 and 1910, Ferguson's enterprise flourished. Indicative of an expanding business, the backroom of the store was vacated in the late summer of 1901 to make room for a deeper addition of two floors; and what passer-by could have missed the new outside sign put in place just before the Christmas of the same year. "Franklin Shoes" for men and "Boardman Shoes" for women continued to sell for two dollars, even while one of Ferguson's newspaper ads urged his patrons to buy "Patrician Shoes" for another dollar and a half and "get double the wear and the fullest satisfaction." Whether you wanted new shoes for Graduation Day, white canvas oxfords for summer wear, or, in the case of women, "Colonial Dame" welt lace boots, which were advertised as "Union Made," Ferguson's was the place to find them. In her reminiscences published in the 1980's about her life in Bridgewater between 1908 and 1920, Ruth Hooper Bishop captured the importance of what had become the oldest and largest shoe store in town, writing: "We always bought our shoes and rubbers at Ferguson's Shoe Store, which is now Gilbert's Dancing School," and then went on to recall that "Mr. Ferguson" was one of the persons she remembered. It is not clear, however, whether she meant the father, Robert, or his son, Robert H., since the founder of the enterprise, a Scottish immigrant long connected to the Central Square Church and the Fellowship Lodge of Masons, passed away at the age of sixty-nine in September of 1909."<sup>83</sup>

As Ferguson's only offspring, it was natural that Robert H., who already was working in the shoe store, should take over the family business at the death of his father. In the early 1900's, the younger Ferguson had also conducted the Bridgewater Band, which, incidentally, used the second floor of the 1901 addition to the store as a meeting place. Perhaps as an indication of his importance in the business, he, not his father, was among the Bridgewater contingent, which also included Mr. and Mrs. Fairbanks, to attend the funeral of Albert J. Elwell in Somerville in 1907. At the end of the decade, the Ferguson business continued to thrive, with its ads not only stressing its stock of good shoes, but also its modern shoe repairing department. About a year after Robert E. took over the reins of the business, papers were passed transferring the Elwell property in Central Square and on nearby School Street to Joseph A. Bowman. Within a week, the new owner was having his block shingled and making other repairs about the property. A century later some residents of the town still speak of the Bowman building, but perhaps

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1903.

<sup>83</sup> *BI*, June 21, Aug. 16, 30, Dec. 20, 1901, Nov. 7, 1902, Sept. 7, 1909; Ruth Cooper Bishop, "My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1920," *Tales Around the Common*, p. 42.



Central Square, East Side

Pictorial History, 1994, p. 55.

very few know that part of this Central Square block was once occupied by the Ferguson Shoe Store. In 1910, however, it was an important part of this retail complex, drawing many shoppers to Bridgewater.<sup>84</sup>

After making a purchase at Ferguson's, it was so very tempting for a shopper to go right next door to enjoy one of the caloric offerings at Hayes's ice cream parlor. No respectable town in the early 1900's was without such an establishment, and, indeed, Bridgewater had four of them. Furthermore, the town's inhabitants were urged to patronize these local places rather than being lured by the rings of peddlers' carts from "elsewhere," which "daily move through the streets of the town." Unlike its next door neighbor, Hayes's was a new business in town, set up by Charles W. Hayes in May of 1901, when he moved to Bridgewater from Rochester, New Hampshire. Until March of that year, this store in the Elwell Block had been occupied by George Henry, who advertised himself as a "Watchmaker, Jeweler, and Optician." When he left Bridgewater a year later, the Independent lamented that the town was left without "an electrician, a "tinkerer,..."<sup>85</sup>

It did not take very long for the new "kid" on the Elwell Block to become a favorite spot for Bridgewater's ice cream lovers. For a dollar and a half one could take out a gallon of Hayes's delicious home-made ice cream. Not as elegant as Casey's on Broad Street, there was something inviting, nonetheless, about sitting on one of Hayes's wire chairs at a round table, also supported by wire legs. For some, it was the serving of saltine crackers with the ice cream that made the experience memorable. Whatever enticed people to this new ice cream parlor, there was no doubt that by the spring and summer of 1901 this new establishment was off and running. On Memorial Day, in some ways Bridgewater's most celebrated public holiday, Hayes sold over twenty gallons of ice cream. Two months later, the proprietor reported that on Wednesday night, which at that time was the evening of the summer concerts on the Common, his store did not have "half enough room...to accommodate his customers." Perhaps the deep addition to the portion of the Elwell block in August was as welcomed by Hayes as it was by Ferguson. Their business friendship must have blossomed considerably that summer when Hayes got out an attractive program for a Wednesday night concert, which featured "a half tone cut of the director, Mr.

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<sup>84</sup> BI, Aug. 16, 1901, March 14, 1902, June 17, 1904, Oct. 4, 1907, Sept. 17, 1909, June 24, July 1, Sept. 23, Oct. 28, 1910; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 83.

<sup>85</sup> BI, Feb. 18, 1898, Feb. 22, March 15, June 21, 1901, March 21, 1902; "Hayes, Charles--Merchant," HH, p. 266.

Robert H. Ferguson.<sup>86</sup>

From the start, Hayes must have realized that he could not rely just on the sale of ice cream, especially in the fall and winter months. In late September of 1901, he decided to serve oysters in various forms; how this bill of fare was received by the public this researcher does not know. The following fall, however, he began make home-made candy, undoubtedly a move that received greater acclamation. As part of the store's decorations at Christmas time in 1904, one of his windows featured an array of confectionery in fancy boxes.<sup>87</sup>

But it was the hot salted peanuts that many town inhabitants of these years, and later, recalled the most. Louise Dickinson Rich vividly captured this memory when she wrote: "Hayes' salted peanuts were a fall and winter feature. Mr. Hayes...roasted and salted them himself every day, taking them out of the oven in the late afternoon. There were never any peanuts like them anywhere, and people made a point of stopping in to get them while they were still hot. He kept them in an enormous age-crazed cream-and-rose china bowl, bigger than the biggest punch bowl, on the corner of the soda fountain, with a tea cup alongside; and for a nickel you could buy a cup full to overflowing. Nobody 'd dream of buying peanuts anywhere except at Hayes." Celebrating its ninth year of business as the decade ended, this spot was known by all in Bridgewater. And, as we shall see, it was to have many more birthdays. In 1988, when Ken Moore listed the stores in the center of town between 1915 and 1925, "Charley Hayes-ice cream, candy, and HOT PEANUTS!" enterprise was among them.<sup>88</sup>

The next two stores on the eastern side of Central Square continued in 1901 to be run by women, Miss Sarah E. Welch and Miss A. M. Foster. As previously mentioned, the early history of the Elwell Block is somewhat clouded, but we do know that the enterprises of these two proprietresses were located in that part of this commercial complex closest to the Bridgewater Inn and "rebuilt" in 1891 by using material from the old Centre School. Another alteration to the block was made in late 1901 when Elwell extended it by erecting a one-story brick addition to the eastern end of the building on a strip of land he purchased from the Bridgewater Inn. This "new part" of the Elwell Block was the first structure in Bridgewater to be built with bricks from the newly established Bassett Brickyard off of Broad Street and,

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<sup>86</sup> BI, May 31, July 26, Aug. 2, 16, 1901.

<sup>87</sup> BI, Sept. 27, 1901, Oct. 10, 1902, Dec. 23, 1904.

<sup>88</sup> Dorothy Lord Mann, "I Remember...Or Was I Told?" Tales Around the Common, p. 52; Dickinson Rich,

as we shall see shortly, was divided into two retail spaces.<sup>89</sup>

At the beginning of 1901, A. M. Foster's five and ten cent store, which opened in September of 1898, sold a variety of goods, including dolls, games, toys, baskets, and yarn. As the proprietress of an important store with "a constantly increasing patronage," Foster, "an agreeable and pleasant spoken lady," was asked about her preference for evening openings, an issue that was much talked about in the spring of 1901. "It would take people living in the outlying districts some time to become accustomed to any change," she suggested, "but if there were to be only three open nights, I should prefer Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday." With the completion of the brick addition to the Elwell block in late 1901, Foster was faced with a major change herself. When Sarah E. Welch, the milliner who had occupied for many years the other store in this segment of the block, decided to move into the southerly store in the new addition, Foster made the decision to enlarge her store by taking that part of the block left vacant by Welch. When the partition in her expanded quarters were removed two weeks before Christmas, Foster found herself in charge of one of the largest stores in Bridgewater. For whatever reason, however, she decided to go out of business in the spring of 1904, holding a "Closing-Out Sale" with "Great Bargains in Every Department."<sup>90</sup>

At the same time Welch moved into the Elwell addition in December 1901, Sumner G. Duckworth, who ran a tailoring shop on Broad Street, transferred his business to the northern segment of this enlarged Elwell block. Unlike his next door neighbor, he would remain there throughout the decade and well beyond. Even before moving to these new quarters on the eastern side of Central Square, Duckworth had had a busy year. As a "Ladies' and Gentlemen's Tailor," his newspaper ads boasted that "garments produced in our shop are cut, made and finished in the best styles of the tailor's art." By the early spring of 1902, the business was thriving in its new location, and most likely his customers and passers-by noticed that the store was "dressed up with a new gilt sign." While Duckworth maintained that his best "ad" was "the kind of clothing we are making every day..." more and more ready-made clothing items for men were offered to his patrons as the decade proceeded. At Christmas time in 1904,

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Innocence Under the Elms, p. 31; Moore, Tales Around the Common, p. 9.

<sup>89</sup> BI, Nov. 22, 1901, Feb. 22, 1924; Townscape Institute, Form 55, pp. 178-180; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 15; the brief description in this latter source labels the building the Bowman Block, but this name should not be used until 1910, when Joseph Bowman purchased the Elwell Block; Pictorial History, 1994, pp. 55, 75, 80; the pictures in this source do include the 1901 addition to the Elwell Block.

his window was “carefully trimmed...of such gifts in the furnishing line as would be appreciated by the male sex.” Genuine panama hats, men’s hosiery, soft shirts, and light weight coats and trousers, “just arrived from the factory,” all appealed to his clientele.<sup>91</sup>

The enlargement of Foster’s and the occupancy of Elwell’s addition by Welch and Duckworth were not the only retail changes on the eastern side of Central Square during the early 1900’s. Ten days before Christmas of 1904, Scotton & Tyler’s, a dry goods firm, moved into the segment of the block where Foster had carried on her business. From the start, Charles F. Scotton was the active partner in the business, running the store with help of his wife and an additional clerk. With its great variety of stock, including blankets, men’s ties and night shirts, children’s gloves and mittens, children and adult underwear, “Jap China,” handkerchiefs, ladies’ sweaters, stationery, toys, Easter post cards, Christmas novelties, patterns and cloth, and “lots more,” it did not take long for this new Central Square partnership to attract many Bridgewater shoppers. No wonder one contemporary of this era later labeled this dry goods business a “Variety Store,” a nomenclature which was to have a different meaning a century later. With its store on the street level, Scotton & Tyler’s also appealed to shoppers with antipathies toward climbing stairs, a decided advantage over C. N. Churchill’s, its competitor on the western side of the Square, with its four steps leading from the sidewalk to its first floor.<sup>92</sup>

One final change in the Elwell’s commercial block came after the death of Sarah E. Welch in 1905, about four years after she had moved to the new brick addition. In late 1906, following a brief occupancy of her millinery shop by Celia Small of Boston, Fred N. Gassett, who had learned the watch-maker’s trade at H. A. Clark’s, became Duckworth’s new neighbor. One of the early ads in the Independent described this newcomer as a “Watchmaker, Jeweler, Optometrist,” who guaranteed “First Class Work.” It was a propitious time for Gassett to start his enterprise in as much as the eastern side of Central Square had not had such a retail-service enterprise following George Henry’s departure from Bridgewater in 1902. It was not long before this new business endeavor, which had at least one full-time

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<sup>90</sup> BI, Jan. 20, 1899, April 12, Aug. 16, 23, Nov. 22, Dec. 6, 13, 1901, April 29, 1904.

<sup>91</sup> BI, Jan. 20, 1899, May 3, 17, 24, June 14, Nov. 22, 29, Dec. 6, 1901, March 21, 28, May 9, June 18, Nov. 7, 1902, June 26, 1903, Dec. 23, 1904, March 16, April 13, 1906, July 5, 1907, May 20, July 11, Feb. 22, 1924; Hal Goodnough, “Bridgewater about 1910,” HH, p. 232; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>92</sup> BI, Dec. 2, 16, 1904, Feb. 13, March 10, 1905, July 12, Oct. 25, Dec. 13, 1907, March 28, 1908, March 31, 1911; Hal Goodnough, “Bridgewater Around 1910,” HH, p. 232; Dorothy Lord Mann, “I Remember...Or Was I Told?”, Tales Around the Common, p. 52; it should be pointed out that it was not until 1911 that the partnership of Scotton

employee, became well-known by Bridgewater shoppers. As we shall see later, Gassett's business was not to remain at this first location throughout its many years in the town. Many decades later, Harold Goodnough, who was "successfully associated for many years with several major league baseball teams," nostalgically recalled in his comments about Bridgewater in 1910 that he purchased his "wife's friendship ring" at Gassett's and his "first straw hat and his first long pants at Duckworth's next door."<sup>93</sup>

None of the retail establishments in the Elwell block in 1910 had been part of Central Square's shopping configuration as long as Cole's Drug Store, located just to the east of the even older Bridgewater Inn. A native of Carver, where his father Hezekiah had conducted a successful lumber business for many years, Orrin Bradford Cole had come to Bridgewater from Kingston around 1880 and was soon the proprietor of "O. B. Cole's Apothecary." The rather complex history of the structure that housed Cole's Drug Store and the first two decades of the business are briefly touched upon in the previous section and need not detain us here, except to indicate that Hosea Kingman, the owner of this block, a well-known lawyer, and Cole's brother-in-law, passed away suddenly in late March of 1900. Remaining part of this commercial complex, Cole's enterprise continued to prosper, becoming even more widely known as a meeting place for townspeople, Normal students, and automobile travelers passing through the town.<sup>94</sup>

Why was Cole's such a popular place in Bridgewater during the early twentieth century? In a general way, the Independent, in its obituary of Cole on September 16, 1918, understood the attraction of this Central Square establishment, writing: "He made it his business to have the goods people demanded and his trade showed that the public appreciated it." More specifically, some were drawn to this relatively small store by "the famous home made ice cream and ten cent ice cream sodas," while others bought their supply of fireworks from "the little fireworks house" placed near the front of the drug store each Fourth of July season. At the Yuletide, Cole's loaded its counters with "all kinds of Christmas wares." Others were enticed by chocolates, soda, stationery, "Eastman Kodaks of all kinds," or by tobacco products, especially cigars. Sometimes the purpose for a visit to Cole's was very specific, such as securing tickets in early June of 1906 for the dinner to be served in West Bridgewater at the 250<sup>th</sup>

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& Tyler was legally dissolved, leaving Scotton solely in control of the business.

<sup>93</sup> BI, Feb. 25, 1893, April 7, 1905, Nov. 23, Dec. 7, 1906, Sept. 9, 1910, Dec. 22, 1924; Hal Goodnough, "Bridgewater About 1910," HH, p. 232; Contributions from Gustaf Newcomb, Lawrence Folloni, and Harold Goodnough, "Bridgewater Sports History," HH, p. 188; Tales Around the Common, p. 9; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>94</sup> BI, March 30, April 6, 1900, Feb. 4, 1910, Sept. 6, 1918.



anniversary celebration of the founding of what had become known as the Old Bridgewater. An anonymous reminiscer alluded to another possibility for Cole's popularity with this amusing tidbit: "Skeeter Mill Pond was O. B. Cole's Pond at the turn of the century..." with the ice being cut "with a hooked saw and hauled out with a horse and team. Whenever a horse fell in during the operation, the ice men would send someone to Cole's Drug Store to get a pint of grain alcohol for warming. Someone else would get the ginger ale, and it wasn't always the horse who got warm."<sup>95</sup>

Perhaps, however, it was the remedies for whatever ailed you that drew the largest number of patrons to Cole's Drug Store. How could a person with the blahs or bleus not respond with a modicum of hope upon reading this particular Cole's ad?: "When you feel that life is hardly worth the candle take a dose of Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets. They will cleanse the stomach, tone up your liver and regulate your bowels making you feel like a new man." (One assumes that a woman was also allowed to try the remedy.) Most likely some smokers, who bought their cigars and cigarettes at Cole's, were glad to know that same establishment had begun in these years to carry such Rexall products as Mucu-Tone, which purported to be "a positive and permanent cure for every form of catarrh." Another of Cole's ads was aimed at "Nervous, Overworked and 'Run Down' Women," urging them to try Americanitis, another Rexall remedy. Indeed, by the early 1900's, some of his pharmaceutical ads read "Orrin B. Cole, Druggist-The Rexall Store." Then there were the ads for "Venol-The Cod Liver Preparation Without Oil," accompanied by a picture of an old woman who evidently was in need of this "Greatest Modern Strength Creator." To later generations, some of the cure-alls touted by drug stores, including Cole's, in the early twentieth century might seem ludicrous, exaggerated, quackish, or simply amusing, except when we see the consuming public a century later overwhelmed with a plethora of over-the counter remedies, never mind those prescribed by doctors. In any case, by the end 1910 Orrin Bradford Cole had been serving his Bridgewater patrons for almost three decades and at fifty-eight most likely looking forward to remaining in charge of his business for years to come. After all his father, Hezekiah, had just died earlier in that year at the age of ninety-five, reportedly having been the oldest man in Bridgewater for at least five

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<sup>95</sup> BI, May 7, 1897, Dec. 20, 1903, Jan. 22, Dec. 23, 1904, June 8, 1906, Sept. 16, 1918; Tales Around the Common, pp. 12-13; "An anonymous Bridgewater Adventurer reminisces," HH, pp. 230-231; Goodnough, "Bridgewater about 1910," HH, p.232; in 1897 Cole's sold advanced tickets for Sousa's band concert in Middleboro.

years.<sup>96</sup>

While devoting much of his time to running his drug store, Cole, by the early years of the new century, had become recognized in the broader sense as “one of the substantial men” of Bridgewater. He and his wife lived in a house conveniently located on Summer Street across from his drug store. It was here that the Coles raised their three children. Following in their father’s footsteps, Guy W., who had been a clerk in his father’s store, became a druggist in Dedham, Massachusetts, and Bernard B. an associate of the Bridgewater store. Their daughter Carrie, a well-known contralto in the town, married George Barney and lived in a house on the corner of Summer Street and Park Terrace, about where the Elwell mansion had stood, and which is now occupied by the Political Science Department of Bridgewater State College. Cole was a member of the Fellowship Lodge of Masons, a trustee of the Bridgewater Savings, and a supporter of the Central Square Church.<sup>97</sup>

Altering a bit the path we followed in the previous section on the stores in 1900, let us leave Cole’s and cross over to the southwestern corner of Central Square to see how Wilcox’s, Bridgewater’s other pharmacy, was faring in the Washburn Block. Apparently there was some rivalry between the two businesses as they vied for patronage in a town whose population went from around 6,000 in 1900 to almost 8,000 ten years later. When interviewed in April 1901 about the perennial issue of stores opening in the evening, Cole indicated his willingness to close at nine o’clock three or four nights during winter, “if the other drug store would do so.” But Nathaniel F. Wilcox, who had become the sole proprietor of this “other” pharmacy after his brother had left the partnership in 1898, had a different view on the matter. Not only did he keep his store open every night, but also supported the proposal that groceries, in addition to opening on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings, should keep evening hours on Tuesday, maintaining it would add to his trade on that particular night. Cole, on the other hand, was indifferent to this suggestion, feeling that it would make no difference to the volume of his trade.<sup>98</sup>

Although its newspaper ads were not as eye-catching as those of Cole’s, Wilcox’s offered its patrons remedies that were “safe and reliable” and appropriate to the season. “C. and D. Mixture,” whatever that was, was suggested as a remedy for “summer complaints and bowel trouble,” which were

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<sup>96</sup> BI, Dec. 24, 1897, May 17, Feb. 22, Nov. 29, 1901, Aug. 14, Nov. 20, 27, 1903, Feb. 19, 1904, Aug. 4, 1905, April 6, 1906, April 5, 1907, Feb. 4, 1910.

<sup>97</sup> BI, Sept. 6, 1918; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 66.

sure to be sequels to the consumption of “unripe and overripe fruit and vegetables.” Wilcox’s “Beef, Iron, and Wine” was touted as a good spring tonic, but was “good all year round...” For those winter coughs, what could be more effective than “Compound Seneca Syrup,” claimed to have been sold in the town since the middle 1870’s. If that did not work, there was always “Cleveland’s Lung Healer,” with the promise of a refund in case this did not do the trick either.<sup>99</sup>

There were similarities and differences in the stock carried by these two drug stores in the early 1900’s. In addition to pharmaceutical products, shoppers were able to purchase such items as soda, stationery, Christmas presents, and cigars in both establishments. Wilcox’s undoubtedly could have done without the robbery in November of 1907 which netted about one-hundred dollars worth of this last item for two young men of Brockton who had a penchant for smoking cigars, a product that some considered to be made from a nefarious and foul-smelling weed. It appears, however, that Wilcox’s did not make or sell ice cream, perhaps one reason it never rivaled its competitor as a meeting place for the town’s inhabitants. Some of the more “intellectually-inclined,” on the other hand, might have been drawn to Wilcox’s by its Circulating Library, especially when such page-turners as The Wings of the Dooming, The Grey Cloak, and The Lightning Conductor were added to its list of offerings. What music enthusiast would not have taken notice of the following newspaper ad?: “The harp that once through Tara’s halls -The soul of music shed -Is silent, for the Phonograph- Now turns out the tunes instead-Edison Phonographs and Gold Moulded Records for sale-Wilcox’s Pharmacy.” Whatever the similarities or differences between these two drug stores, Wilcox’s, unlike Cole’s, has long been forgotten and certainly has not been labeled “famous” by later commentators of Bridgewater’s past. A longer history, delicious ice cream, fireworks, or simply being a more convenient and congenial place to gather might have contributed to Cole’s more prominent place in the town’s annals. Or could it be the many photographs of Cole’s that have survived and been published compared to the dearth of visual primary sources on Wilcox’s? Ironically, however, the Washburn building is still extant, whereas the portion of the Kingman Block housing the Cole Drug Store in the early 1900’s has been replaced by a newer structure.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> BI, Jan. 20, 1899, April 12, 1901; Atlas of Plymouth Country, 1903.

<sup>99</sup> BI, Feb. 22, April 5, May 3, July 5, Aug. 2, 1901, April 1, 1904, Jan. 20, 1905, April 27, 1906; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>100</sup> BI, June 26, July 3, Oct. 16, Dec. 11, 1903, March 18, July 22, Nov. 11, Dec. 23, 1904, Jan. 20, June 2, 1905.

After leaving the Wilcox Drug Store in the Washburn Block, a shopper might have walked northeastward, passed the historic Tory House and in hardly any time at all made purchases at F. N. Churchill's Dry Goods Store, which had replaced the similar business of D. L. Bodfish in 1894. Churchill's was located in the Masonic Block, the history of which is briefly presented in the previous section. With his prior experience in a wholesale dry goods firm in Boston, this relatively new retailer in Central Square was conducting a thriving business at the start of the new century. The installation of an acetylene gas plant for lighting his store in the fall of 1901 was an indication of Churchill's anticipation of a "bright" future. Between 1901 and 1910, it was one of Bridgewater's leading retail companies, easy to reach by the trolleys which stopped in front of the store before reversing their direction and returning to Taunton, Brockton, and Middleboro and other communities along the way.<sup>101</sup>

Churchill's carried a great variety of dry goods and, in a proportionate way, seemed to have had more salespersons than some of the large chain stores of a century later. While the present writer has not done a thorough search concerning Churchill's employees during these years, several generalizations can be safely made; and in some degree these apply to other retail workers in Bridgewater. Since this particular store sold products for children and adults of both genders, it is not surprising that clerks of both sexes were part of its workforce. In a community that was still heavily English-Yankee and Irish, neither was it surprising that most employees were native-born and English-speaking. Unlike some workers in Bridgewater, most notably those in the shoe factories, salespeople in the town's stores were not unionized, and, most likely, received lower wages than the skilled laborers in the town's industrial firms such as the Stanley Iron Works and the McElwain's shoe firm. There were some compensations for those working in a retail store, especially the larger ones in Central Square, however. Employment, for example, was generally steadier compared to that in the factories which were more subject to the vagaries of the economic cycle. Also, there was a certain gentility, at least perceived by some in the town, associated with working in one of the stores in the village center, compared to laboring in a factory along the railroad tracks. The personal columns of the Independent in the early 1900's seldom mentioned that a particular industrial worker was taking his or her annual vacation, but invariably mentioned the employees of Churchill's, including Anna Bird, the cashier, Herbert Reed and Walter Hastings, sale

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<sup>101</sup> BI, Nov. 18, 1901, June 19, 1914; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 20; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 77,

clerks, who were on their summer holiday of one week; although one suspects Florence Oliver needed more time off (undoubtedly without pay) when she visited her home in Scotland in the summer of 1903.<sup>102</sup>

Indicative of Churchill's importance to Bridgewater's retail trade are the comments made by women who later took the time to write their reminiscences. Ruth Hooper Bishop remembered that Miss Minnie Churchill, who worked in her father's store, became a "friend for life" after sending the young Hooper a gift package from Churchill's containing "lovely blue silk material," something which Mrs. Hooper evidently had deemed too expensive to purchase. Later on as a high school student, Bishop worked in the store under Minnie Churchill, who had remained active in the enterprise after her father sold the business to Luce & Co. in 1914 to pursue a career in the cranberry business, both as an owner of extensive bogs in nearby Carver and as sales manager of the New England Cranberry Sales Co., with offices in Middleboro. Louise Dickinson Rich's memories of Churchill's were also colored by cloth, but, in her case, not silk. As she and her sister Alice "climbed the four shallow stairs leading from the novelty department to the yard good section" of Churchill's, they both knew that Mrs. Dickinson, with her sense of Yankee thrift, would never contemplate buying any material with a "striking design, such as scarlet plaid or Roman stripes." No, lamented Rich, "this year was no different from last, and again we'd be saddled with a navy-and-dark-green Black Watch plaid, or something equally humdrum." In a cheerier vein, Dorothy Lord Mann remembered Churchill's "good assortment of toy's at Christmas." Among the many patrons of this dry goods store, almost all of whom did not write down their memories, it was perhaps Mann's brief reminiscences that would have struck the most responsive chord. Many surely remembered the "most elaborate Christmas tree in town," which adorned one of Churchill's front windows or how on the day before Christmas in 1904 the proprietor gave a present to every "child under 13 who came accompanied by an older person."<sup>103</sup>

After leaving Churchill's, a shopper might have made a stop at a shoe store run by William H.

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79; Townscape Institute, Form 47, pp. 157-158.

<sup>102</sup> BI, Jan. 4, Feb. 15, 1901, Aug. 8, 1902, July 17, 24, 1903, May 20, 1904, Dec. 22, 1905, Dec. 17, 1909; Bridgewater Book; Diner, A Very Different Age: American of the Progressive Era, pp. 168-171.

<sup>103</sup> BI, Dec. 23, 30, 1904, Dec. 23, 1910, June 19, 1914, May 5, 1933; Hooper Bishop, "My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1920," Tales Around the Common, p. 42; Dickinson Rich, Innocence under the Elms, pp. 28-30; Lord Mann, "I Remember... Or Was I Told?", Tales Around the Common, p. 52; Ken Moore, "1936 Advertisements," Tales Around the Common, p. 16; Minnie H. Churchill managed the store for Luce & Co. until the



West Side Central Square

Pictorial History. 1987. p. 19.

Rudkin and Charles H. Burrill. This enterprise, a competitor of Ferguson's on the east side of Central Square, opened its doors a week before Christmas of 1903 in vacant quarters in the Independent Block, located immediately northeast of the Masonic Block. Known as the Central Shoe Store, it carried a complete line of footwear for all ages and, reportedly, within a week was doing "very" satisfactorily. Averring to be the "leading Shoeist" in Bridgewater (one wonders what Ferguson's thought about this claim), Rudkin and Burrill carried a variety of brands, including Nesmith shoes for young ladies and Walk-Over shoes for both sexes. Their store also carried shoes made in the factory of William L. Douglas, located in nearby Brockton, the leading shoe manufacturing center in the United States. Douglas's picture in his newspaper ads made him a familiar figure, helping to elect him the Democratic Governor of Massachusetts in 1904, although Bridgewater stuck to its traditional political roots by giving more of its votes to John L. Bates, the Republican candidate.<sup>104</sup>

To help promote trade, the Central Shoe Store offered Green Trading Stamps and in one sale, early in 1905, gave away a "Beautiful Lamp" with each purchase of \$2.00 or more. Not to be outdone by Ferguson's, it also became involved in repairing shoes. From the start, Rudkin was the active partner in the enterprise and, indeed, the firm's legal name was W. H. Rudkin & Co. In the spring of 1904, as a sign of his commitment to the business, he moved into a house on Grove Street, which had been recently occupied by Wesley L. Smith of Bridgewater's Baptist Church. Still, his shoe store, unlike Ferguson's, was not to have a long tenure in Central Square. In January of 1905, the partnership between Rudkin and Burrill was dissolved by mutual consent, with the former planning to continue the business on his own. Within a year and a half, however, he too decided to call it quits. The store was then rented by A. G. Locke for his tailoring business connected to his men's clothing shop next door in Odd Fellows Block; more about this shortly.<sup>105</sup>

Cheerier than her memories of Churchill's were the ones Dickinson Rich had of the Central Square Grocery, otherwise known as Alden's, located in Odd Fellows Block, still a new structure in the first decade of the twentieth century. As a young girl, she and her sister Alice could not help but compare their braided hair and "homemade, plain, and practical dresses," made from cloth purchased at

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spring of 1933 when, interestingly enough, she became its owner, and the store again became known as Churchill's.

<sup>104</sup> BI, Dec. 18, 25, 1903, March 18, April 1, Sept. 30, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, 11, 1904, Jan. 13, Aug. 11, 1905.

<sup>105</sup> BI, April 1, 1904, Jan. 5, 12, 1905, June 22, 1906.

Churchill's, with "a life-size Fairy Soap poster," in Alden's window, "showing the picture of a little girl with long curls" dressed in a fur-trimmed coat and bonnet. Most patron's of Alden's, a minute's walk northeast from Churchill's, would simply have described it as a small grocery store on the western side of Bridgewater's Central Square. Perhaps some might have remembered its Christmas window display of 1904 with its arrangement of canned goods amidst "imitation snow and evergreen."<sup>106</sup>

Isaac R. Alden, the store's proprietor, was born in Bridgewater in 1844, to one of the original families of the Old Colony (Plymouth). Like his fellow retailer Henry T. Burrill, he had learned the grocery business by working for Hooper's before opening up his own market. During the debate in April 1901 over the matter of evening openings, Alden preferred closing every night except Wednesday and Saturday, but admitted that "there is hardly a Sunday in the year that I do not come here to get something for someone in an emergency." That "something" might have included "sugar, flour, salt, potatoes, eggs, butter" or any number of "fancy goods." Before the Thanksgiving of 1904, he urged his customers to bring in their baskets and fill them with "EVERYTHING that makes 'that dinner' a success," or to place their orders by the telephone, assuming they were among the small but growing number of inhabitants of the town who owned one of these new contraptions. For shut-ins, extra busy people, or those adverse to walking, Alden's horse-drawn delivery wagon was another reason for patronizing this establishment. This small grocery also lured some shoppers by its ad: "Remember we give S. & H. Green Trading Stamps."<sup>107</sup>

A basic change in the store's management staff occurred in 1908. On July 28, Isaac R. Alden died from a hemorrhage, most likely the aftermath of a "severe attack of grip" he had suffered in the previous winter. The caption of the obituary in the Bridgewater Independent said nothing about his proprietorship of the grocery store, but rather read: "Isaac R. Alden-Of Ancient Family and a Gallant Soldier of the Civil War." He had been proud of his role in the war to preserve the union and free the slaves and, in 1902, had displayed "an attractive collection of his personal relics" of that conflict in his store window. While never holding public office, Alden had been "prominent in the local Army post, interested in the Unitarian Church, and a member of Fellowship Lodge of Masons." As an indication of

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<sup>106</sup> BI, Dec. 23, 1904; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 22; Atlas of Plymouth Country, 1903.

<sup>107</sup> BI, Feb. 22, April 12, 1901, Nov. 11, 1904, Jan. 6, 20, Nov. 10, 1905, July 31, 1908, Jan. 21, Dec. 23,



his prominence in the town, O. B. Cole and Samuel P. Gates were among the bearers at his funeral.

About a week later, it was announced that the store would continue along the same lines established by its founder and that his son Thomas P. and Lysander H. Washburn, a clerk in the store since the late 1890's, were to run the business as a team. The real management, however, lay with the latter under whom the business was to thrive, remaining for many years among the most up-to date grocery stores in Bridgewater.<sup>108</sup>

From 1901 to 1904, Alden's next-door neighbor on the ground floor of Odd Fellows Block continued to be the men's store run by Christian A. Schelde. This business, not unlike Duckworth's across the Common, sold "Gents' Furnishing Goods," such as "Handsome Neckwear," repaired men's clothing, and produced custom-made garments, including suits, in its "own work-room," boasting that its "Work is Superior to All Others." Schelde was "so rushed with orders for custom clothing and repairs in the fall of 1901 that he added another tailor to his [work] force." Contributing to the brisk pace of the business was the fact that C. Schelde & Co also served as an agent for the White Star Laundry, located in Brockton. One of Schelde's ads read: "Leave Your Bundles With Us."<sup>109</sup>

Yet, this small retail shop was not to have a long history in town. As an early indication of his discontent over the fast pace of work, Schelde, when interviewed in April 1901 about evening hours, voiced his preference for closing three nights during the week and having a fixed hour for closing, except on Saturday night. Could it be also that he felt pressure from some business interests in town when in early 1903 he became the first store in Bridgewater to carry products displaying a union label? McElwain's, the town's largest employer, consistently refused to put this type of label on its shoes since it would be tantamount to recognizing the local Boot and Shoe Workers' Union. For whatever reason, in early 1904 Schelde's tailoring business was sold to George M. Gifford. He had been in charge of that aspect of the Schelde's enterprise, which had occupied the rear of the store in 1903. The C. Schelde Co. continued to exist for about two more months, with the name A. G. Locke accompanying that of Schelde in the newspaper ads. By the end of March, however, it was reported that "Christian Schelde of Spring Hill Ave., has taken a position in connection with the Boston office of the New York Life Insurance Co."

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1910, Jan. 5, 1912.

<sup>108</sup> Crane, p. 804; BI, Aug. 29, 1902, July 31, Aug. 7, 1908, Nov. 12, 1912; Tales Around the Common, p. 10.

<sup>109</sup> BI, Aug. 2, Sept. 27, 1901, March 7, 21, 1902, Feb. 19, 1904; Townscape Institute, Form 45, pp. 153-154.

In July, he and his wife left Bridgewater and moved to Dorchester, part of greater Boston.<sup>110</sup>

For the next eight years or so, this men's store in Odd Fellows Block, 23 Central Square, was operated by A. G. Locke, who had been a traveling salesman in men's clothing and furnishings; although for several months in 1904, the enterprise was managed by a J. J. Scheffler. In the late spring, Gifford, the tailor, left Locke's, starting his own business in the Gibbs building on Broad Street. In June of 1906, however, Gifford resumed doing the tailoring for Locke in the Independent Block in the space made vacant when Rudkin's shoe store closed its doors. Boasting of the "largest assortment of Neckties that Bridgewater ever had," one of Locke's first ads was entitled "Ties That Bind," a catchy phrase which might have drawn considerable attention in a town where hymn-singing Protestants still made up the majority of the population. For those readers of the Independent who did not associate these words with hymnology, perhaps the following part of the ad had more appeal: "We Give Green Trading Stamps." Whatever first drew patrons to A. G. Locke's, many Bridgewater men and boys soon began to rely on this business for gloves, straw hats, umbrellas, suspenders, summer and winter underwear, hose, linen handkerchiefs, sweaters, shirts, and lots more. In addition to carrying these ready-made furnishings, Locke's, as was the case with its predecessor, specialized in suits, exhorting its patrons not to "wait until you are shabby before ordering" either a ready-made one for \$6.00 to \$20.00 or having one tailored at a very reasonable price.<sup>111</sup>

From the start, Locke fit easily into the retailing community of the town. Among the businessmen interviewed by the Independent in July of 1904, he voiced his admiration of this newspaper, which carried his ads, comparing it to "the metropolitan papers" and stating that it "could not help but please the towns-people." Even those who did not read Locke's ads might have noticed his first yuletide window, displaying a big "Merry Christmas" card and a variety of furnishings for boys and men. Two years after he moved into his store Locke played a significant role in the move to form a businessmen's club in town, serving on a committee of three to draw up a constitution for the new organization, to be known as the Bridgewater Business Men's Association. When McElwain's changed its payday to

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<sup>110</sup> BI, Feb. 22, March 22, April 5, 12, 1901, Oct. 17, 1902, Jan. 30, 1903, Feb. 5, March 11, 25, May 6, July 1, 1904; McElwain's maintained that higher wages demanded by the union would make the company's shoes less competitive in the market place.

<sup>111</sup> BI, March 25, May 6, July 22, Aug. 5, 12, Sept. 30, Oct. 7, 1904, Nov. 24, 1905, Feb. 9, June 22, 1906, March 1, April 7, Oct. 4, Dec. 20, 1907, Feb. 14, 1908, June 17, Sept. 2, 1910, April 11, 1912.

Wednesdays in the fall of 1906, Locke, joined by C. F. Scotton and R. Ferguson, served on a committee of this group to canvas the feelings of Central Square retailers concerning the possibility of having stores open on that night, a move that would allow patrons to settle up their “running accounts” and then purchase something new. Many of the members of this organization, it should be pointed out, also belonged to the Commercial Club, of which Locke served as president for a time.<sup>112</sup>

Perhaps some men were drawn to Locke’s by its proprietor’s interest in the growing sport of bowling in Bridgewater and surrounding communities. By 1908, Locke headed a fine team of bowlers labeled the Locke’s Specials, a group challenged by other bowling teams, including the one formed at McElwain’s. To heighten the competition and desire to win, Locke “offered one his ‘special’ hats to the bowler among the other four of his team having the highest score at the end of the season.” In the following chapter more will be said about his involvement with this sport, especially as a co-owner of the Locke & Stevens bowling alleys on Broad Street. As of 1910, however, Locke’s main business interest was still in his clothing store, although this will change in the spring of 1913 following a disastrous fire.<sup>113</sup>

Moving northeastward along the western side of Central Square from Odd Fellows Block, we come immediately to its much older neighbor, the Keith Block, a brief history of which is presented in the previous section. During the first decade of the twentieth century, this property continued to house a number of commercial endeavors. Among them was the jewelry store of Harry A. Clark, a well-established component of Central Square’s retail community by 1901. Being without clerical assistance, Clark preferred the stores in Central Square to close Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings. As the eye-glass part of his business increased, Clark decided to employ a “Skillful Optician” to repair “spectacles” and fill prescriptions for glasses. When trade picked up at Christmas time, he also required additional help. In an era before Americans found it cheaper or more convenient to discard old articles, perhaps one of the new employees assisted in mending umbrellas, a service advertised in the Independent. Still, Clark’s by 1910 had become known as “an old reliable place for jewelry.” Its proprietor, who “was also interested in canoeing and other out-of-door activities,” was to serve Bridgewater shoppers for another ten years.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> BI, March 25, May 6, July 22, Aug. 5, 12, Sept. 30, Oct. 7, Dec. 23, 1904, Feb. 16, Nov. 16, 1906.

<sup>113</sup> BI, March 13, 1908, Jan. 3, April 11, 1913.

<sup>114</sup> BI, Feb. 22, April 5, 12, Sept. 27, 1901, Dec. 26, 1902, Jan. 20, June 2, 1905, Dec. 5, 1911, Nov. 8, 1918, Feb. 13,

In a town that could boast of several establishments that sold and/or made confectioneries, it was not surprising to find one of them in the Keith Block. Between 1898 and 1901, C. Everett White had operated an enterprise known as the Candy Kitchen in Bridgewater's center. (My sources have this store either in Central Square or on Broad Street.) What is clear, however, is that by 1910 Charles Faxon had become the proprietor of the Central Square Candy Store which was located next to Clark's in the Keith Block. True to its name, the early newspaper ads of this small confectionery shop initially stressed the quality of its candy. How could a reader with a "sweet tooth" not be enticed by the following ad: "Our CANDY LINGERS in the memory of those who once taste...our special creamery caramels, chocolates or bon-bons. They are the kind that tempt 'just one more' till the box is empty." By the end of the decade, Faxon's was already becoming more than a candy store, with patrons discovering it was a good place to buy "ice cream, soda, ...tobacco, and cigars." For those in the town who enjoyed light reading, the proprietor announced: "We have lately put in a line of popular novels at popular prices." Faxon's would become even better known in the next decade, rivaling Cole's as a meeting place for many townsfolk.<sup>115</sup>

Moving closer to the corner of Central Square and Main Street, perhaps visits to the Post Office and the Bridgewater Savings Bank, both located in the Bank Building, and Hooper's, which we have previously discussed, next occupied some of a shopper's time. But as supper time approached, a stop at A. I. Simmons, Bridgewater's leading meat market, became a necessity. Also known as the Central Square Market, an establishment not to be confused with the smaller Central Square Grocery run by Alden, this enterprise was situated on the sharp curve opposite the northern tip of the Bridgewater Common. By the turn of the century, Albert I. Simmons, who had come to Bridgewater from nearby Raynham in 1882, had been in the grocery business in his adopted town for fifteen years, first in quarters underneath Joshua E. Crane's store and then, beginning in 1889, in the new structure it was to occupy on Main Street for many years. One of the few retailers in the town's center who owned his own store, Simmons was among Bridgewater's significant taxpayers, contributing between two and three hundred

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June 6, 1920; Plymouth County Atlas, 1903; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>115</sup> BI, Jan. 20, 1899, Jan. 4, 1901, Jan. 24, 1902, Jan. 2, Feb. 25, April 8, May 20, July 8, Aug. 19, 1910; Tales Around the Common, p. 10; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 174.

dollars a year to the town's coffer during the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>116</sup>

During this time, Simmons oversaw some basic restructuring of his enterprise. After being its sole proprietor for almost twenty years, he decided in April of 1903 to bring Alexander Cushman, who had worked in the business for fifteen years, and Bartholomew Flynn, who had started as a clerk in the market in the early 1890s, into the firm. These actions necessitated a legal change of the name to A. I. Simmons & Co. In 1904, Cushman, however, severed his connections with the company, leaving Simmons and Flynn as the two remaining partners. How many patrons of this popular grocery and meat store paid much attention to these changes is difficult to say, but most of them probably continued to use the name Simmons or, beginning around 1906, took a cue from the company's ads and referred to it as the "Market on the Busy Corner." Not only a brisk trade made this latter nomenclature appropriate, but also the frequency of the trolleys, with their accompanying screeches as they turned this sharp corner. As more and more automobiles added to the traffic in the second half of the decade, this location emerged as the most active and dangerous curve in Bridgewater. Simmons pushed with no avail to have it rounded out when the connection between Main and Summer Streets was made straighter in 1910.<sup>117</sup>

Whatever name the customers assigned to this market, it continued to be one of Bridgewater's leading groceries. Among other items, it featured fresh fruit, berries, and vegetables in season, fine bottled and canned goods, tea and coffee, eggs, butter, cheese, "and everything you would expect to find in a first-class market." Even in a town known for its strawberry "festivals," it is hard to imagine that A. I. Simmons & Co. "bought and sold over 1,000 boxes of strawberries" on July 3, 1905, almost all of them coming from the beds of A. E. Brown on Bedford Street. Most in the town thought of Simmons as a place to get fine meat, poultry, and fish and were aware that it had delivery and butcher wagons. Perhaps a bit hyperbolic, but certainly eye-catching, one of its ads read: "A Southern Legislature has just been considering a bill against making GOO-GOO-Eyes. It would be folly to attempt to enforce a law against making goo-goo eyes at our meat." If one wanted choice beef, lamb, pork, poultry, and, beginning in 1903, fish, Simmons was surely the place to go. It especially catered to the needs of its patrons on the

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<sup>116</sup> BI, Aug. 16, 1901, March 21, 1902, Aug. 28, 1903, Aug. 27, 1909, Aug. 12, 1910; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Tales Around the Common, p. 10.

<sup>117</sup> BI, July 1, 22, 1904, Sept. 27, 1912; the danger that traffic posed to this corner would be a re-occurring issue for many years to come; the reconstruction of the connection between Main and Summer Streets will be discussed at length in the section dealing with the town's Highway Department between 1901 and 1910.

major holidays-turkey at Christmas, spring lamb and hams at Easter, for examples. For those Bridgewater inhabitants with more exotic tastes, duck, geese, cod tongues, oysters, and smoked meats were also available. Simmons's cold storage room, supplied with ice from his own source on North Street, permitted him to buy slaughtered animals in large quantities, allowing his butchers to consistently meet the demands for different cuts of meat and poultry. In early 1903, for instance, he purchased a "carload of meat in... Brockton, consisting of 23 cattle and 24 lambs." At one special sale in 1910, the company disposed of over a ton of hams. In short, A. I. Simmons in the early 1900's, while not the only meat market in Bridgewater, was recognized as its leading one.<sup>118</sup>

As an important participant in Central Square's retailing community, Simmons was concerned with the matter of evening hours, keeping up the appearance of his store, promoting good relations with his employees, and playing a constructive role in the civic life of the town. In the very early 1900's, he felt "obliged" to stay open every night of the week, except Sunday evening, especially in the summer to accommodate those patrons who did not or could not buy ice and, therefore, had to make nightly purchases for the next day's breakfast. When the members of the Business Men's Association voted in April of 1906 to close their stores on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday at 6:15 p. m., Simmons was not among the published list of fifteen names of those who agreed to comply with the decision immediately. His own ads, however, indicated the company would close on these evenings, beginning on May 1. Doing its bit to create the Christmas spirit in Central Square, A. I. Simmons usually had one of the more elaborate window displays, including one in 1903 depicting "a miniature forest of greens...with large and small game, deer, fox, raccoon and hare, possibly representing "Wild Animals I Have Known;" it was reported that Dan Lehan, one of the employees, was not "Represented." Some shoppers, in addition to enjoying Simmons's window at Yuletide, might also have noticed in April of 1903 that his block was "resplendent in a new coat of paint." Beginning in 1906, some patrons might have paid little attention to outward appearances of the store since they were now able not only to have their orders delivered but

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<sup>118</sup> BI, Feb. 22, April 12, June 14, Aug. 2, 23, 1901, March 7, 21, 1902, Jan. 10, 1903, March 18, July 22, 1904, July 7, 1905, Sept. 7, Dec. 21, 1906, Jan. 11, Aug. 16, Oct. 25, Dec. 20, 1907, Jan. 10, 17, 1908, Jan. 12, 28, Feb. 25, May 20, July 1, 1910; Goodnough, "Bridgewater Around 1910," HH, p. 232; Bishop, "My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1910," Tales Around the Common, p. 42; Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," Tales Around the Common, p. 48; Pictorial History, 1994, pp. 11, 75; Bridgewater Book.

even to call them in on the telephone.<sup>119</sup>

Simmons appears to have had cordial relations with his partner Flynn and the employees of the company. Every Christmas, all the workers received a turkey; and, in return, they presented boxes of fine cigars to Simmons and Flynn. In the summer, the company's considerable workforce of butchers, clerks, ice cutters, and delivery men spent a day at their employer's Brant Rock ocean home, known as the Fair View House, located about twenty miles northeast of Bridgewater. On occasion, Flynn also enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Simmons at this seaside house, which after 1910 was described as a hotel. My present research has revealed nothing about the wages of Simmons' employees, but they certainly varied according to the type of work performed. It does appear that fulltime workers at the market enjoyed a week's vacation in the summer, presumably with pay. By 1910, Simmons had been dealing with patrons and employees in his grocery and meat business for over twenty years. During eight of these, 1902-1910, he also served as deputy sheriff for Plymouth County. Whether or not retirement from his main business was something he had yet begun to contemplate, we know from hindsight that he would sell his enterprise at the "Busy Corner" to Flynn in September of 1912, in what was described as "one of the most important business changes" the town had witnessed in a long time. For many years to come, the Simmons were to divide their time between residing in their house on Union Street in Bridgewater, running their "hotel" in the Brant Rock section of Marshfield, Massachusetts, and wintering in Florida.<sup>120</sup>

While the majority of the stores in the town's center in 1901 were located around the Common, the shopping district by this time included a number of retailing businesses along Broad Street. A relatively new store, R. J. Casey & Co., before 1910, was completely on the east side of Broad Street, not far from where it formed the corner with Summer Street. Only four years after establishing his variety store in the new Calvin Estes building in 1897, Casey, a Bridgewater native who had formerly conducted a barber shop on Main Street, found himself running a very prosperous and popular company, known for its ice cream parlor, soda fountain, candy offerings, variety of tobacco products, newspaper selection, and waiting room for those taking the electric shuttle down Broad Street. Along with John E. and Bartholomew Flynn, Casey, the leading force behind the creation of the Bridgewater chapter of the Knights of Columbus, was among a growing number of Irish Catholics who were beginning to play an

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<sup>119</sup> BI, Dec. 25, 1903, April 8, Dec. 23, 1904, April 20, Sept. 7, 1906, Jan. 11, 1907.

important role in the commercial and civic life of a town still dominated by the Yankee-English majority.<sup>121</sup>

The years from 1901 to 1908 witnessed a number of changes in Casey's successful enterprise. By 1901, patrons could pick up the New Bedford Evening Standard late in the afternoon. In March of 1903, he sold out his periodical and magazine department to the Wilcox drug store and, in return, secured the sale of the Boston Sunday Globe in Bridgewater. In the following year, Casey's was also carrying the Sunday edition of the Boston Herald. The store's floor space increased in late 1903, occupying the entire Estes building when Dr. Kelly, one of its occupants, moved his practice to Odd Fellows Block. By the end of February of the following year, changes and improvements had been completed in Casey's enlarged store, which included moving the entrance to the corner near the Square, replacing the old show window with one that better displayed, especially at Christmas time, the company's "fancy boxes of confectionery...and choice pipes," taking out the old stairway, enlarging the waiting room for street car patrons, and, in general, making it "a modern and attractive store." The increase in space also allowed Casey to make some changes in the internal arrangement of his store. A new soda fountain, a new long cigar case, and walls lined to the ceiling with cabinets of North Carolina Pine added to the attractiveness and utility of the first floor. In addition, Casey was able to use the second floor for his office and "stock rooms for his wholesale tobacco and candy trade." Beginning in September of 1905, Casey's installment of a telephone and a seating chart of the Brockton City Theater in the store's waiting room made it convenient for patrons to order tickets and make seat selections for performances.<sup>122</sup>

The biggest changes in Casey's enterprise came toward the end of the decade, however. After selling candy for almost thirteen years, he decided in October of 1909 to engage in its manufacture. William F. Swift, an experience candy maker who had been connected with one of the largest confectionery firms in New England, was hired to run this new operation, at first using the new quarters over the store, but then, eventually, the basement of the building. Ruth Hooper Bishop in "My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1920," recalled that she would "lie down...on the sidewalk and watch the candy makers" at work, all the while savoring the "smell of chocolate." For others it was the Prima Donna "Nu

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<sup>120</sup> BI, July 14, 1905, Dec. 23, 1910, July 7, 1911, July 5, Aug. 23, Oct. 1, 1912, Dec. 21, 1923.

<sup>121</sup> Pictorial History, 1987, pp. 18, 24; Bridgewater Book; "Casey, Richard J., 1865 to 1922--Merchant," HH, p. 258.

<sup>122</sup> BI, April 21, Sept. 20, 1901, March 20, Oct. 30, 1903, Feb. 26, July 8, Nov. 11, Dec. 23, 1904, Aug. 11, Sept. 1,





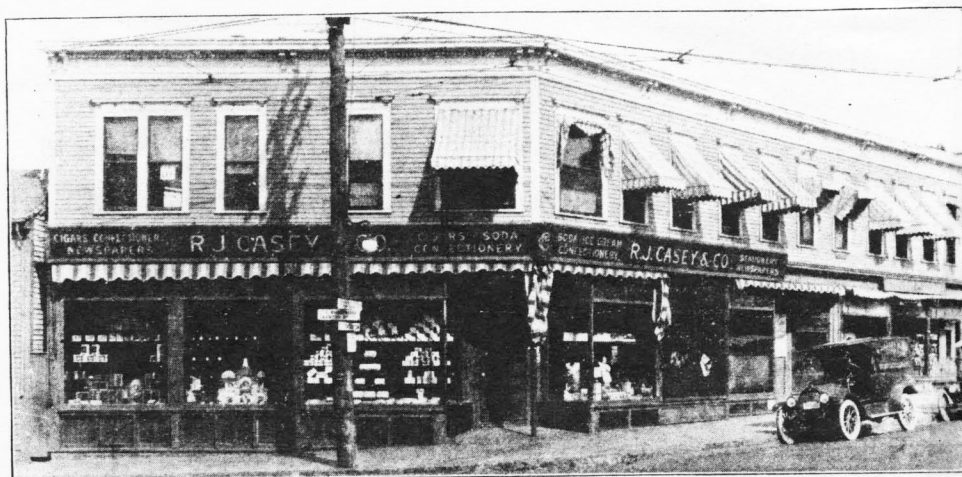
Roger's Hardware Store (Pictorial History-1987, p.24.)

## RICHARD J. CASEY & CO.,

Manufacturers and Dealers in Ice Cream, Confectionery, Cigars, Tobacco  
and Smokers' Articles.

One store at least in Bridgewater gets the attention  
of all classes. Hardly an hour in the 24 but this favorite

The Casey store is the waiting room for the street  
railway patrons. Comfortable seats, delicious confections



View of R. J. Casey & Co.'s Store, Broad and Summer Streets, Bridgewater, Mass.

Chu,” a strawberry flavored kiss, “made fresh every day,” that was undoubtedly the most popular confection produced in Casey’s “Candy Kitchen.” But it was only one of forty-two “toothsome delicacies” manufactured at the store. Another innovation, which appealed to the town’s sweet tooth, took place in the summer of 1910 when R. J. Casey & Company began to employ an ice cream wagon to make daily trips to all parts of the town.<sup>123</sup>

As important as the decisions to manufacture its own candy and employ an ice cream wagon, these innovations were dwarfed by the announcement in May of 1910 that the R. J. Casey and Co. would join the H. T. Burrill’s “country store” as one of the two main occupants of the new Estes Block to be erected on the corner of Broad and Summer Street. While we have discussed this development in two other contexts--improving the lineup of Main and Summer Streets and the moving of the old Crane store backward to make room for the new building--the project was delayed a bit because of some problems peculiar to Casey’s location. The original plan called for raising slightly the original Casey’s store, which was in the old Estes block, and then connecting it to the new Estes block. It required, however, some negotiations between the representatives of the Estes and Gilbert estates, two interests owning land on this site on the eastern side of Broad Street, before the tangle over property boundaries could be sorted out. When a settlement was finally reached in late July of 1910, it called for cutting off a foot of the old Casey store prior to connecting it to the new Estes Block. In any case, about two weeks before Christmas, he occupied his enlarged store, which featured an “up-to-date” soda fountain and a new ice cream parlor next to the center hallway.<sup>124</sup>

To some inhabitants of Bridgewater, including Louise and Alice Dickinson, nothing could equal the exquisite experience of sitting in Casey’s ice cream parlor, “separated from the less genteel transactions of the store proper by a bead curtain,” consuming “the nut fudge marshmallow special, covered with chocolate shot and topped by a maraschino cherry.” (Some things never change.) Taking a less self-indulgent approach to the new block and its two main stores, Casey’s and Burrill’s, the

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1905, April 22, 1906; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903.

<sup>123</sup> BI, Feb. 11, March 4, July 15, 1910; Bishop, “My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1910,” Tales Around the Common, p. 42; Goodnough, “Bridgewater About 1910,” HH, p. 232.

<sup>124</sup> BI, May 6, 20, June 17, July 29, 1910; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 29; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 68, 71; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903.

Independent opined that a “new year in Bridgewater merchandising” had begun.<sup>125</sup>

If Casey’s was quite a new business on Broad Street in the early 1900’s, this was hardly the case of its next-door neighbor, the hardware-stove-tin ware enterprise of Jerome B. Rogers. Born in 1840, he came to Bridgewater in 1868, having previously learned the tinsmith trade in Sandwich and Sagamore on Cape Cod. By 1901, Rogers’s business, mirroring a trend throughout industrial America, including shoe manufacturing in Bridgewater, dealt with machine-made articles, rather than hand-made tin ware which had been usually crafted during the long winter months. The following ad in the Bridgewater Advertiser best sums up the multi-nature of Rogers’s enterprise in the early twentieth century: “Ranges, Heating Stoves, Coal-hods, Shovels, Pokers, Sieves, Hardware, Tinware, Agateware-Furnaces set and repaired.” While his stock was not as varied as that carried by Fairbanks, Rogers appears to have had a prosperous trade in what proved to be the last decade or so of his business. Living on Church Street, he most likely enjoyed the luxury of walking to his shop each workday. He became a member of the Bridgewater Business Men’s Association at the time of its formation in 1906 and went along with the collective decision to stay open on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday evenings. By 1910, however, Rogers, nearing the age of seventy, was most likely anticipating retirement, a step he would take in two years. Compared to Fairbanks, Rogers’s store has not figured prominently in the annals of the town enterprises for a number of reasons. For one thing, the building in which Rogers conducted his business, unlike the Fairbanks Block, is no longer extant. That Fairbanks conducted his enterprise until 1929 and that his name until mid 2007 was still associated with Bridgewater’s largest hardware store, albeit in a different location, are also considerations why his historical recognition has dwarfed that of his competitor, Jerome B. Rogers.<sup>126</sup>

Another indication of the increasing commercialization of Broad Street in the early 1900’s was the ability of Bridgewater inhabitants to do their grocery shopping in this section of the village center. But describing clearly this retailing activity is not easy. The Massachusetts Census of 1905 credits the town with having nine groceries and three establishments selling meats and provisions, not making it clear whether the second figure is part of the first number. Adding to the confusion were the number of proprietary changes made in the Broad Street markets between 1901 and 1910 and the fact that more than

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<sup>125</sup> Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, pp. 31-32; BI, Dec. 16, 1910.

<sup>126</sup> BI, April 5, 12, 1901, April 20, 1906, Feb. 18, 1910, March 22, 1912; Bridgewater Book; Pictorial History, 1987, p.24; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 86, 87.

one store used Broad Street as part of its name. The origins and early history of Leonard's Market is a case in point.<sup>127</sup>

In 1894, Frank Williams and John Mayo became the proprietors of the Broad Street Market, which by 1899 employed "nine experienced assistants," and kept "three wagons and two order carts constantly busy attending to the wants of their patrons." Located at 33 Broad Street, this market came under Williams's sole control by 1901, with one of his ads boasting that "customers leave well satisfied at all times when leaving their order at our discretion that we will cut, trim and send home ready for the fire the prime, choicest, tenderest, and juiciest beef, lamb, mutton, pork or veal. We keep at all times selected Poultry, Game in season, Choice Meats, and we cut them in an expert manner, and sell at the lowest prices." In the spring of the same year, Williams added his voice to the chorus of opinions concerning the question of evening openings. He noted his dissatisfaction with feeling compelled to keep open every night of the week, except Sunday evening, adding that no matter what time he planned to close was the time most of his patrons came to do their shopping. Perhaps tired of facing the trials and tribulations of running a market, he decided to sell his business. In November of 1902, the new firm of B. A. Leonard and J. F. Wixon took over the enterprise, promising to "carry a complete line of meats, provisions, and canned goods of the best qualities...and run a delivery and order cart about the town." But within three months this partnership was dissolved, leaving Leonard as the sole proprietor.<sup>128</sup>

"Al" Leonard was already a familiar figure in the town, having been for several years a motorman on the street railways, which in early 1901 had come under the control of the Old Colony Company. A native of Bridgewater, he had lived with his father on Main Street before moving in 1900 to Campello, a section of nearby Brockton. Perhaps some of his early patrons also knew Leonard's wife, Harriet, who graduated from Bridgewater High School, studied at the Normal School, and then taught in Bridgewater. Since he came from a family of marketmen and had learned the meat business as a young man, it was not a surprise to many in Bridgewater when he took over this well-established market with its meat and grocery wagons. Located, just northeast of Casey's and Rogers's, Leonard's soon became "one of the most popular markets" in town, "noted for the choice quality of meats and the freshness and

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<sup>127</sup> Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. III, pp. 273, 276.

<sup>128</sup> BI, Dec. 14, 1895, Feb. 15, 1896, May 21, Oct. 22, 1897, Feb. 22, April 12, 1901, Nov. 7, 1902, Jan. 30, 1903, Feb. 7, 1919; Bridgewater Book.

## LEONARD'S MARKET,

Broad Street, Bridgewater, Mass., B. A. Leonard, Proprietor.

This is one of the most popular markets in Bridgewater, located on Broad Street in the very centre of the shopping district. Mr. B. A. Leonard is the proprietor, and established his place here sixteen years ago. He has lived in Bridgewater nearly 25 years, and is one of our go-ahead, up-to-date merchants and citizens. His market is noted for the choice quality of meats and the freshness and variety of its fruits and vegetables. He operates two auto delivery trucks, one for the rural districts, which



Daily Scene at Leonard's Market.

shopping district. Mr. B. A. Leonard is the proprietor, and established his place here sixteen years ago. He has lived in Bridgewater nearly 25 years, and is one of our go-ahead, up-to-date merchants and citizens. His market is noted for the choice quality of meats and the freshness

carries to your door daily everything the market affords. Telephone orders given prompt attention. The market is noted for its up-to-date equipment, its sanitary conditions, and the courtesy of its salesmen. Mr. Leonard makes a specialty of supplying his customers with the choicest.

variety of it fruits and vegetables.” Beginning in February of 1910, Leonard also became the owner of the Bridgewater Bakery on Broad Street, a business previously run by Thomas H. Sutcliffe. Within a month, however, Leonard sold this business to J. M. Conway of Cambridge, Massachusetts, who, with his wife, anticipated conducting “a first class bakery.” But Leonard’s Market would remain an important part of the Broad Street commercial configuration under Leonard’s proprietorship until the early 1920’s, known for giving telephone orders prompt attention and operating “two delivery trucks,” one of them assigned to the outlying districts of the town.<sup>129</sup>

Leonard’s was not the only market on Broad Street during the first decade of the twentieth century, but my present research on this matter is somewhat limited, leaving certain questions unanswered. For instance, it is not clear to me whether The Broad Street Cash Market, which opened under new management in November of 1902, was the same enterprise run by Leonard and Wixon for about three months before the former became the sole proprietor. Adding to my confusion, it was reported in October of 1903 that the “Broad street market was opened again last week, Joseph H. Carr of Salem being the proprietor.” Referred to as Carr’s Market or the Daylight Market, this business, however, filed for bankruptcy in the summer of 1907. Then, in late November of 1910, S. Grant & Son took over the Bridgewater Cash Grocery, which was located at 130-132 Broad Street. From the start, this market was open every evening and on Sunday and served as a waiting room, most likely for those taking the trolley to East Bridgewater and beyond. We will hear more about this company after 1910, but we do know that before the end of that year it was planning “to open a meat market in connection with their grocery business.” Around the same time S. Grant, the senior proprietor of this outfit, moved from New Haven, Connecticut, to a tenement on Stetson Street.<sup>130</sup>

Townspeople were not limited to buying meat and other groceries in the Broad Street shopping area. Small establishments on the same thoroughfare offered fruit, bakery goods, ice cream, and candy for those Bridgewater residences desiring a more “varied” diet. J. Balboni’s fruit store, established in the same year as Casey’s-1897, was probably the best-known of these smaller shops and is mentioned, at least in passing, by a number of Bridgewater residences who have recorded their memories of the early 1900’s.

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<sup>129</sup> BI, Nov. 7, 1902, Nov. 23, 1903, Jan. 11, 1907, Feb. 25, 1910, Feb. 14, 1913, July 29, 1921; Lord, “The First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater,” Tales Around the Common, p. 48; Goodnough, “Bridgewater about 1910,” HH, p. 232; Bridgewater Book.

Bridgewater's Italian community, including foreign and native born, numbered at this time a little less than three hundred, but would grow considerably in the next several decades. If Casey's represented the increasing participation of the Irish in the town's commercial life, Balboni's was an early example of the emerging role played by Italians.<sup>131</sup>

Officially known as The Bridgewater Fruit Company by 1901, Balboni's carried fruits such as oranges, fancy lemons, figs, pineapples, cantaloupes and bananas, not unknown produce, but just starting to become part of the ordinary American's diet in the late nineteenth century. Peanuts, candy, tonic, cigars, and other tobacco products also drew some patrons to Balboni's. As with any business, this small fruit enterprise had its share of minor mishaps. In the fall of 1901, one its windows was blown in by a strong wind, and a week later there was a small blaze on the store's roof, but luckily a quick response from the fire department accounted for the building suffering only trifling damage. About a year later, an overheated chimney caused another fire. Again, there was little damage, despite the fact that the lack of available horses delayed the fire engine from getting to the scene as promptly as in the earlier fire. Fire and wind were not the only things that drew the citizenry's attention to this small fruit market on Broad Street. One can only imagine the drama in the late spring of 1903 when Balboni provided the bananas and the table to settle the argument between "two sons of Italy" as to who could consume the most of this yellow fruit. It was subsequently reported that the winner ate nineteen bananas. A far less appealing form of advertisement, related many years later by Dickinson Rich, centered around the rumor that a tarantula had been found in a bunch of bananas at Balboni's. Reminiscing about the alleged incident, she opined that "it was a wonder" that the store's proprietor survived the ordeal. In any case, the Balboni's fruit enterprise was to enjoy many more years of doing business in Bridgewater.<sup>132</sup>

Balboni's did not remain the sole fruit store on Broad Street. In the very early 1900's, Lawrence Costa continued to operate his fruit business on the western side of Central Square, but in March of 1905 he relocated his "fruit-stand" to Broad Street, occupying that part of the Gibbs building

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<sup>130</sup> BI, Jan 11, March 22, May 17, July 12, 26, 1907, Nov. 4, 25, 1910, Jan. 6, Aug. 25, Sept. 29, 1911.

<sup>131</sup> BI, Aug. 27, 1920; Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. I, p. 335; Goodnough, "Bridgewater about 1910," HH, p. 232.

<sup>132</sup> BI, June 7, 21, 28, Aug. 30, Sept. 27, Oct. 25, 1901, June 27, 1902, May 29, 1903, July 8, 1904, Aug. 27, 1920; in a brief announcement on August 27, 1920, about the 25th wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Balboni, the Bridgewater Independent wrote: "Mr. Balboni is not only the oldest fruit dealer in town, but is a veteran among the merchants, as most of them are later comers on the stage than he;" Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p.

which had been used by Clarence L. Keith and Arthur W. Swift for selling antique furniture during the previous two years. How much competition existed between Balboni's and Costa's is hard to say, but both sold good fruit and, in the words of the latter's ads, "A good After-Dinner Cigar." Costa's, unlike Balboni's, was on Broad Street a relatively short time. Beginning in June of 1912, its proprietor became associated with the fruit enterprise of Costas, Ligouras & Co., located next to the Post Office in Central Square.<sup>133</sup>

While many Bridgewater women still did their own baking in the early 1900's, some of them preferred patronizing the Bridgewater Bakery on Broad Street, a business that changed hands several times. Charles A. Locke was the proprietor of this enterprise from the middle of the 1890's to March of 1904, boasting that every item "Bread Cake Pastry" is "Baked in Our Own Ovens." When beset by financial difficulties, Locke sold the business to his long-time employee, Nelson W. Cronk, who proposed to run "a first-class bakery," promising, at some point, to employ a daily delivery wagon and to get "his bread into the grocery stores." The following newspaper ad on July 22, 1904, indicated that Cronk failed to deliver on these promises: "THE REASON Why I can sell a 12 cent blueberry cake for 7 cents, is because I don't have the expense of equipping and maintaining teams on the road. Counter sales also ensure first handed bread." Running a small bakery shop was not easy, requiring early and long hours of work. In little over a year, Cronk sold his business and moved his family to Maine where he planned to "take a much needed rest." Luckily for him and his patrons, another proprietor, Thomas W. Suttcliffe, took possession of the store immediately.<sup>134</sup>

Hailing from Brockton, Suttcliffe moved to Grove Street in Bridgewater and began at once to make extensive changes to his newly acquired bakery shop, including the installation of two new ovens early in August of 1904. Hoping to get patronage of organizations such as churches and lodges, he indicated his plans to put a delivery team on the road. In one of his early ads, the new proprietor informed his would-be-customers that every Saturday afternoon and evening the "Nicest, Brownest, most juicy Baked Beans" would be available, certainly an appealing prospect for inhabitants of an old New England

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27; Tales Around the Common, p. 12, .

<sup>133</sup> BI, May 10, 1901, March 20, July 31, 1903, April 29, 1904, March 10, June 2, 1905, Nov. 23, 1906, July 11, 1907, June 7, 21, 1912; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; it might be recalled that Costa had operated a fruit stand on Broad Street in the 1890's before moving to the west side of Central Square.

<sup>134</sup> BI, April 4, Nov. 14, 1902, March 4, 11, 1904, April 15, July 22, 1905.



town. Whether or not Suttcliffe made a good living in his baking enterprise, it is hard to say. But in early 1910, the Bridgewater Bakery changed hands again when it was purchased by B. A. Leonard, who, in turn, soon sold it to M. J Conway of Cambridge, Massachusetts. The story of his enterprise, known as Conway's Ideal Bakery, will be continued in the next chapter.<sup>135</sup>

Before ending this recital on the retailers of Broad Street between 1901 and 1910, it might be acceptable to sound a final sweet note. In addition to Casey's, there was another candy business on Broad Street which changed hands a number of times. In January of 1901, C. Everett White, as he had since 1898, was running the Candy Kitchen on this busy thoroughfare, selling his candy at retail and wholesale levels. Advertised as "Nothing better made," White's pure molasses candy sold for only fifteen cents a pound. By July, however, Joseph Sanford, who at the time was also running the Owl Lunch, had become the store's proprietor and a year later put an addition on to the building. Labeled "Sanford's Popular Candy Store," it was one more place for the town's inhabitants to also indulge themselves in their favorite flavor of ice cream or sip some cold soda on a hot summer afternoon. Then in late June of 1903, Walter King took possession of the shop. Along with Hayes's, Casey's, and Cole's, this candy and ice cream establishment on Broad Street did its share in satisfying the town's sweet tooth.<sup>136</sup>

Not all commercial enterprises in Bridgewater between 1901 and 1910 were located in Central Square or on Broad Street. To purchase any type of lumber or other building materials there was no better place to go than to the establishment run by Wendell P. Hutchinson, located not far west of Plymouth Street and between the railroad tracks and Spring Street. Involved in the lumber business beginning in the 1880's, he had become the proprietor in 1898 of this lumber yard which had been formerly owned and operated by A. S. Lyon. It is not clear to the present researcher if Lyon's widow ever sold the Spring Street property to Hutchinson. His house on Shaw Road, as beautiful as it was, would not seem to have accounted for Hutchinson's considerable annual tax bills from the town. There is no doubt, however, that his lumber enterprise prospered in the first decade of the new century.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> BI, July 7, Aug. 4, 11, 1905, March 4, 1910, May 16, 1913.

<sup>136</sup> BI, Jan. 20, 1899, Jan. 4, June 7, July 26, 1901, Jan. 24, May 23, 1902, June 26, 1903, April 24, 1905; it could be that King moved his business to the Keith Block before Charles Faxon became its proprietor and renamed it the Central Square Candy Store around 1910.

<sup>137</sup> Crane, p. 796; Bridgewater Book; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; BI, Aug. 16, 1901, June 14, 1907, Aug. 12,

Individual homeowners, professional carpenters, and contracting companies went to Hutchinson's yard to secure lumber of all types and other building materials, including cement, lime, and hair, ingredients needed by expert plasterers. If some Bridgewater residents preferred the tin roofs sold by Henry Prophett, others went to Hutchinson's to purchase Red Cedar shingles imported from Vancouver, Canada. Windows and doors, including cheaper screen doors selling for one dollar, could also be bought from this growing and increasingly well-known lumber establishment, which by 1908 could be easily consulted by telephone. To accommodate an expanding trade, Hutchinson added a new lumber shed to his property in June of 1902. As the decade drew to a close, he predicted "a good season for builders and those who deal in building materials." By this time, Hutchinson most likely was already planning to erect a new lumber yard and office building in 1912. Despite intense commitment to his lumber enterprise, Hutchinson found time to play a constructive role in the community, serving, for examples, as a director of the newly-formed Bridgewater Co-operative Bank and, most importantly, as a leader of the local tribe of Red Men and the Past Sachem's Association of Massachusetts.<sup>138</sup>

Since some of the inhabitants of the outlying districts did not always have the time or means of transportation to shop in the center of the town, it was only natural that several small neighborhood stores were established to provide a variety of everyday groceries, and even less essential, but enjoyable, items such as ice cream, candy and cigars. Among the better known of these stores was Sheehan's, which from 1901 to 1912 was located more or less on the corner of High and Main Streets, placing it about halfway between the Stanley Works (officially called this by November of 1903) and St. Thomas Aquinas Church on Centre Street. During these years many of the town's Irish Catholics, the second largest group in Bridgewater, resided in this part of town, where they would be joined by a small number of Italians as the decade wore on. Henry P. Sheehan, the proprietor of this business, was representative of a small but growing number of Irish retailers in the town, some of whom we have already mentioned. A native of Bridgewater, he was among the eighteen hundred of the twenty-five hundred Irish inhabitants of

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1910.

<sup>138</sup> BI, Aug. 16, 1901, March 7, June 13, Aug. 15, 1902, March 11, July 8, Nov. 11, Dec. 16, 1904, Jan. 13, May 21, June 9, 1905, Feb. 9, Sept. 7, 1906, March 22, April 12, June 14, July 12, 1907, Jan. 10, March 27, Nov. 6, 1908, June 25, Aug. 27, 1909, March 18, May 10, 1910, Feb. 23, June 7, 14, 1912; Bridgewater Book.

Bridgewater in 1905 who were born in the United States.<sup>139</sup>

Surviving photographs and written memories of Sheehan's store place it on the corner of Main and Center Streets, but this was the post-1912 location. The original store was on the other side of Main Street in a building erected by Walter King in 1899, but purchased by Sheehan in 1901. Sometime before 1912, two additions, one of them a barber shop, increased the size of the building. Even with these enlargements, Sheehan's was hardly a grand edifice, and its proprietor was not listed among the town's inhabitants paying an annual property tax of fifty dollars or more. Nonetheless, to those in this part of the town, Sheehan's was a convenient spot to secure, among other things, groceries, confectioneries, and beverages. Adding to the store's appeal was the installation of a new soda fountain in 1910. Patrons could exchange the "news" of the day as they waited to board the trolleys between Bridgewater and Brockton. Most likely Sheehan's would have remained at this location had a fire not devastated the premise in early 1912. But, as we shall see later, this business was to have a future on the corner of Main and Center Streets in a new and larger structure and would become even more popular when a postal sub-station was established there in December of 1912.<sup>140</sup>

Equally well-known as Sheehan's was the neighborhood store on the corner of Pleasant and Prospect Streets in the Scotland area of the town. From 1901 to 1905, W.H. H. Andrews was the proprietor of this grocery store, which, like Sheehan's, had the advantage of being on a trolley line (to and from Taunton in this case) and serving as a post office substation, something Scotland, as an old section of the town, had enjoyed since 1879. By late 1901, there were indications that Andrews was thinking of getting out of the business. In December of that year he gave up his Titicut and North Middleboro grocery route, and it was reported that he had secured a position at the McElwain shoe factory. In any case, we do know that in April of 1905 Andrews sold his grocery business and the building on this key corner in Scotland to Arthur R. Tinkham and moved "his household effects into his other house on Prospect Street..."<sup>141</sup>

Tinkham and his family occupied quarters over the store, and the site began to be called

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<sup>139</sup> Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. I, p. 335; BI, April 28, 1911, Feb. 16, June 28, 1912; "Henry P. Sheehan," Bridgewater Book.

<sup>140</sup> BI, Nov. 25, 1910, April 28, 1911, Feb. 9, June 28, Aug. 30, Dec. 6, 1912; Bridgewater Book; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 22; Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," Tales Around the Common, p. 46.

<sup>141</sup> BI, Aug. 16, Dec. 20, 1901, April 28, 1905; HH, p. 180; Townscape Institute, Form 173, p. 416, Form 174, p. 418;

Tinkham's Corner, an appellation used by many well into the twentieth century. In his comments about Bridgewater in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Lord noted that even with only one arm Tinkham "could handle a bag of grain as well as most men could with two arms." Dickinson Rich recalled walking home with her sister Alice from a church picnic at the "Nip," so they could save the trolley fare to buy at Tinkham's a nickel's worth of candy, which "with care" would "last...clear into Central Square." As important to his establishment as such a transaction might have been, one of Tinkham's first and most important business steps was to make application for appointment as postmaster for this substation, a position he did receive with the support of many people in Scotland and the Bridgewater Republican town committee. (He would lose this position in 1911 due to an infraction of the rules of the postal department rather than any criminal intent.) While the sign over Tinkham's establishment, "The Emporium to the Universe," was a "bit" of an exaggeration, this store did play an important role in the life of Scotland as a place to get groceries, take care of postal matters, wait for the trolley, meet friends, and hear about the goings-on in what was a tightly-knit outlying district of Bridgewater.<sup>142</sup>

Other parts of the town also had their neighborhood stores in the early 1900's. Not far from the town's center was King's store on Summer Street, opposite Covington Street. Described by Lord as "probably ten feet wide by twenty feet long with a wood awning on front," the premise was heated by a pot-bellied stove. Evidently quite familiar with the store and its proprietor, he also describes how King, who was physically impaired, managed to maneuver on a "three-wheeled wheelchair" around the store and his living quarters in the rear of the establishment. Exactly when King ran this enterprise and later moved to the center of town to become a newspaper reporter is not yet known to this writer. Further south than King's, E. S. Kingsley ran a grocery store on Titicut Street near the State Farm; Kingsley's became Caswell Bros.' in 1913. In the eastern part of Bridgewater, known as Prattown, Gesin's neighborhood store was located on the corner of Plymouth and Walnut Streets, a junction that continues to be the site of a "variety store" in the twenty-first century. At the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Benjamin F. Ellis, who was born in nearby Kingston in 1861, became proprietor of a

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the maps in both Forms are helpful;

<sup>142</sup> BI, April 28, 1905, Aug. 18, 1911; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 229; Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," Tales Around the Common, p. 47; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 39; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 38; this infraction will be discussed more fully in a later section of this work, but essentially it involved mixing cash of the postal part of the store on a temporary basis with that of the business proper.

general store near the Dyer School in Scotland.<sup>143</sup>

The present writer hopes that future research might provide additional information about the stores in the following paragraph. In July of 1901, E. L. Edwards of Matfield, a section of East Bridgewater, rented space for a small grocery business in the Washburn Block, located immediately east of the fire station on School Street. In November of that year, Edwin L. Wilds announced that he was opening a shop on School Street, planning to carry groceries, including canned goods; it could be that his enterprise was the successor to that of Edwards. In any case, both were small undertakings, with no indication that they provided any competition to the major markets in Central Square or on Broad Street. Two other stores on the Square deserving mention were N. Fisher's which carried fruit, nuts, cigars, and tobacco, and the Central Square Candy Store, whose proprietor was Charles Faxon. We will learn more about Faxon's when we cover the years after 1910. Even more of a mystery to me is a men's tailoring business run by R. D. Hanson, who advertised Custom Made suits for \$16 to \$18 in an ad of March 1907. But a year later, R. D. Hanson & Co. ran a meat and produce shop on Plymouth Street, boasting cheaper prices than those of its competitors. In September 1909, A. G. Provost, taking advantage of his location near the newly-built L. Q. White shoe factory on Spring Street, made "extensive improvements" to his grocery store. As an indication that Bridgewater folk did not live by bread alone, Sampson and Co., in 1906-1907, ran a piano salesroom next to J. R. Callahan's real estate office on Broad Street.<sup>144</sup>

If any inhabitants of Bridgewater between 1901 and 1910 decided to do all their shopping, for whatever reason, in their home town, it would appear that most items they needed or wanted could be found in some local store, especially in the village center. (This sweeping assertion did not apply to law-abiding citizens desiring drinks with some alcoholic content). Frequenting local retail establishments involved several considerations: hometown loyalty, convenience, an enjoyable social outing, no viable choice due to a transportation problem, or not wishing to be the targets of opprobrium, especially if seen boarding a trolley to Brockton or Taunton where "there were admittedly bigger and better stores." Dickinson Rich, remembering her childhood days in Bridgewater around 1910, asserted that local merchants "moved to the front windows of their stores to check who was taking his business to

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<sup>143</sup> BI, July 29, 1910, Sept. 19, 1913; Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," Tales Around the Common, pp. 44-47; "Ellis, Benjamin Franklin, 1861 to 1939--Merchant," HH, p. 262.

<sup>144</sup> BI, July 12, Nov. 29, 1901, July 8, 1904, March 22, Sept. 27, 1907, Sept. 25, 1908, Sept. 10, 1909, April 8, 1910;

Brockton....” Still, there were those daring souls in Bridgewater who, throwing caution to the wind, boarded a trolley or a train or, in a few cases, drove an automobile to shop elsewhere, lured by newspaper ads, including some printed in the Bridgewater Independent.<sup>145</sup>

Brockton, the only city in Plymouth County, attracted its share of Bridgewater shoppers. The James Edgar Company on Main Street, a bona fide department store, was certainly among the retail establishments of the “Shoe City” which appealed to inhabitants of smaller surrounding communities such as Bridgewater. Larger than either of the two dry goods stores in this town, Fraser’s, a rather recent addition to Brockton’s retail community, had built up a large business by the early 1900’s, boasting that it was the city’s “Leading Ladies’ Furnishing Store.” For Bridgewater shoppers who wanted more choice in furniture than Prohett’s had to offer, a trolley trip to Atherton Furniture Co. on Center Street in Brockton was worth the fifteen cents fare. A smaller community than Brockton, but larger than Bridgewater, Taunton had stores like F. R. Washburn’s and Talbot’s that vied for Bridgewater patronage. Indeed, the Talbot Company on one Saturday in April 1905 enticed Bridgewater shoppers by promising to “pay your carfares to and from Bridgewater...on purchases of 5\$ worth or more.” For the real adventurous Bridgewater shopper going to Boston by train or trolley connections made for a grand day even if no purchases were made. Thus, while the folks of Bridgewater did the bulk of their shopping in their own town at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were increasing opportunities for some of its citizens to shop elsewhere, a trend that became even more apparent as Americans began their romance with the automobile.<sup>146</sup>

### **Services in Bridgewater**

#### **1901-1910**

A cursory look at the Bridgewater Inn through 1900 was presented in the previous section, with special attention paid to George J. Alcott who became its proprietor as the nineteenth century drew to a close. One of my conclusions read: “Notwithstanding its ups and downs, most townspeople by the end of

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Pictorial History, 1987, p. 13; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 74, 81.

<sup>145</sup> Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 17.

<sup>146</sup> BI, May 7, July 16, 1897, Dec. 18, 1903, Feb. 19, Nov. 11, Dec. 2, 30, 1904, April 21, 1905, Nov. 18, 1910.

the nineteenth century most likely could not have imagined Bridgewater without its elegant hostelry.”

There is much truth in this statement, but it needs to be pointed out again that the 1890’s was not generally a good time for this venerable establishment. The fortunes of the Inn, however, changed dramatically when George J. Alcott became its proprietor at the end of the decade.<sup>147</sup>

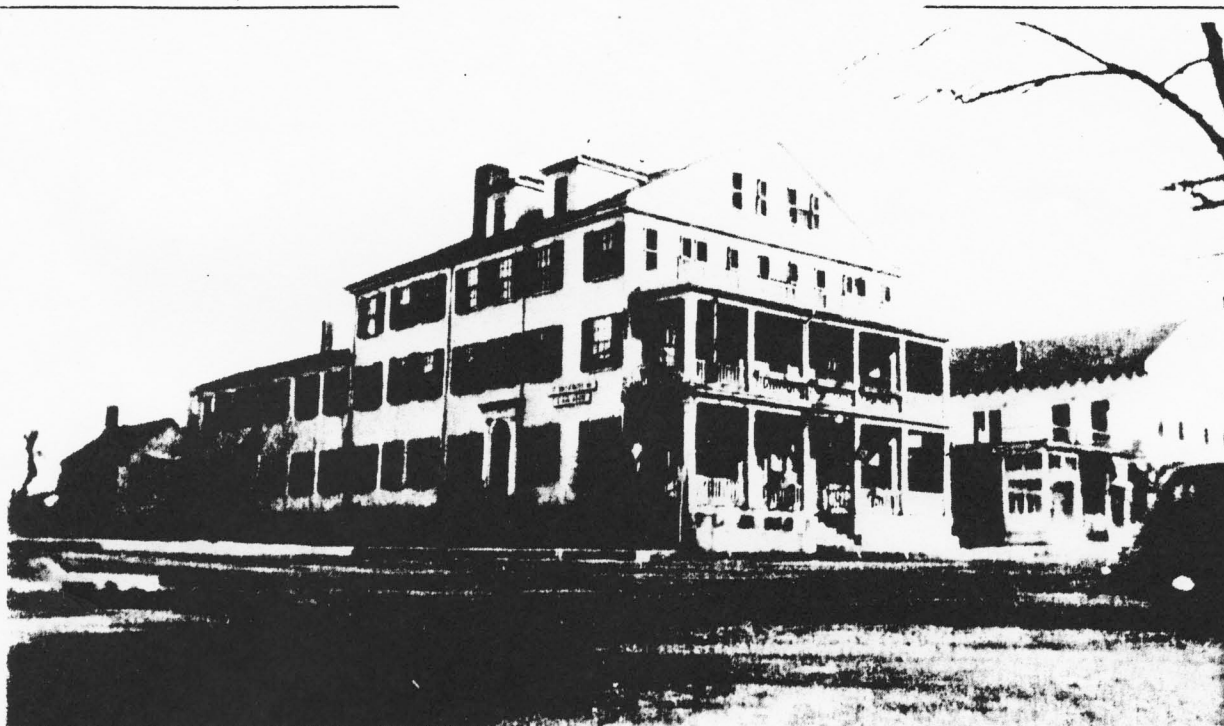
Hailing from Chelsea, Massachusetts, Alcott was among a significant number of Bridgewater businessmen who were not natives of the town. His socialistic propensities and political activities appeared not to have hampered his entrepreneurial drive to make the old hostelry a going concern. The hotel would not return to the days when it was the scene of many brilliant social gatherings and, indeed, revelry, re-enforced by intoxicating liquors; that was before the town disallowed saloons in the late 1860’s and went “dry” about two decades later. But between 1901 and 1910 Alcott proceeded to upgrade the physical condition of his establishment. Accommodations were expanded by adding rooms in the attic, remodeling the ell, and using some of the space of the Inn’s social hall. Prophet’s, the furniture store a bit south of the Inn, must have appreciated the business when asked by Alcott to furnish nine of these new rooms in the summer of 1901. Periodic painting of the Inn’s exterior seemed to be a priority, as did the papering and painting of the halls and rooms. Passersby might have noted the addition of three dormer windows to the attic of the building in the spring of 1901 and the removal of three old chimneys a year and a half later.<sup>148</sup>

That the Bridgewater Inn prospered in the early 1900’s is best illustrated by its increased patronage. In 1910, more than seventy boarders and sojourners were enjoying the amenities and advantages offered by this rejuvenated hostelry, advertised as a “Respectable and Comfortable Hotel with Moderate Prices.” During the early years of Alcott’s proprietorship, the Inn had running water, electricity (rather than candles and kerosene lamps), and a new steam heating system. Alcott, who was appointed to a town sewerage committee in 1902, soon sensed that Bridgewater would not be willing for a long time to appropriate the considerable funds needed for a town-wide sewerage system and, therefore, added a new cesspool to the hotel’s property. For the convenience of those driving the latest mode of

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<sup>147</sup> BI, March 4, 1910; the article in this source is an excellent history of the Bridgewater Inn, a name that replaced that of Hyland House in the 1890’s; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 7; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903.

<sup>148</sup> BI, May 10, July 12, Nov. 29, Dec. 20, 1901, Nov. 28, 1902, April 1, July 29, 1904, April 11, 1905, July 5, 1907; Townscape Institute, Form 56, pp. 181-183; Bridgewater Book; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 64; HH, p. 236.



Bridgewater Inn

Pictorial History, 1994, p. 80.



transportation, the automobile, Alcott built a cement parking garage in 1906 and installed a gasoline tank a year later. At the same time, he continued to provide accommodations for carriages and sleighs and the horses needed for these older ways of getting around. While some guests might have missed a little libation during their stays at the Inn, they surely enjoyed the fine, but reasonable, fare served in the Inn's dining room, including "the best of garden, orchard and dairy products" supplied by the Alcott's farm on Swift Avenue in Bridgewater, which he purchased in 1913. The efficient operations of the hotel was in good measure due to its housekeeper, a Mrs. Smith, who, according to one observer, was "a friend of everybody," knowing "no rest so long as her services are required in any part of the house." In short, the years between 1901 and 1910 were prosperous ones for the Bridgewater Inn. Unbeknownst to anyone then, it would continue to grace Bridgewater's Central Square for almost another three decades.<sup>149</sup>

While the Bridgewater Inn has a secure place in the history of the town, not many citizens would now have any knowledge of "Hotel Bradford" on Hale Street. This establishment, which Frank D. Barr began to run in 1900 and then bought in 1903, was really a boarding house (by 1901 it was called The Bradford House) and was located not far from Bridgewater's industrial area along the railroad tracks. Before taking ownership of the building, Barr had it shingled. After becoming its owner, he began to make some major improvements in the property, putting in hot and cold water, installing a steam heating system, and lighting the house by acetylene gas. The most visible change was the raising of the roof to permit the addition of fifteen rooms. As was common in a small town like Bridgewater, Barr employed local men to do the work. Amos Eisenhower, who had a shop on Summer Street, was hired to do the carpentry. Clarence M. Shaw, who had been in the employ of J. H. Fairbanks for many years before starting his own business in a new building in the rear of the Independent Block in Central Square in 1901, did the plumbing for the new addition. Barr's ads in the newspaper indicated that the premise had a telephone connection, certainly appreciated by his boarders, many of whom were workers in the nearby shoe factories. In 1904, Barr built an addition to the his stable, reflecting most likely his own interest in racing horses more than a desire to provide a first-class facility for those boarders, if any, who had horses themselves. Whatever the case, Barr's boarding house flourished in the first decade of the century. The

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<sup>149</sup> BI, Dec. 21, 1900, March 4, 1910; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 8; "Alcott, George J.--Hotel proprietor," HH, p. 255; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 64, 67.

structure is no longer extant, having been torn down and replaced by the Citizens' Club.<sup>150</sup>

Since many women at the beginning of the twenty-first century no longer wear hats, certainly not those made individually by a milliner, it might come as a surprise that Bridgewater between 1901 and 1910 had at least six businesses devoted fully or partly to creating hats, even though the town's population still numbered less than eight thousand. A century ago, a lady, especially from the broad middle and upper-middle classes, would not have thought of attending church, social events, and civic gatherings, or going shopping without donning a hat, perhaps taking pride in the realization that it would be unique and that she would not be mortified by meeting another woman wearing an identical one. Catering to this clientele, a number of women, quite often single and with an artistic bent, would go into the millinery business, one of the few entrepreneurial endeavors open to their gender. In Bridgewater, as was the case in other communities, the women who ran millinery shops were professionals in their field, traveling to New York City and Boston to familiarize themselves with the latest in hat creations and then holding sessions to apprise their patrons of the new styles. Although the milliners in Bridgewater occupied shops in Central Square and Main and Broad Streets, it appears that they did not play a role in such organizations as the Commercial Club or the Bridgewater Business Men's Association, both active in Bridgewater during the first decade of the twentieth century. Most likely women were not asked to participate. On the matter of evening openings, the town's millinery establishments were not always in line with other retailers, preferring to adjust their hours to spring and fall openings in their line of business.<sup>151</sup>

Miss Emma A. Hermann was consistently the most prominent milliner in Bridgewater. For a succinct, witty, and informative description of this single woman, one could do no better than to peruse the four pages devoted to her in Dickinson Rich's Innocence Under the Elms. This source is highly creditable since Hermann occupied part of the Independent Block where the author's father, James H. Dickinson, published the Bridgewater Independent for so many years. Among other things, Hermann is described as a "regular imbibor of our father's tea," a creator of hats that "were pretty strange and

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<sup>150</sup> BI, Jan. 26, Feb. 23, 1900, Jan. 18, Feb. 1, May 17, 1901, May 6, 1903, June 8, 1906, Feb. 11, 1910; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Bridgewater Book; Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," Tales Around the Common, p. 45.

<sup>151</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, "Population," Volume I, p. 91; BI, Dec. 27, 1901, April 4, Sept. 19, 1902.

wonderful,” a “tall and slim woman” who “was something to look at,” a talented raconteur with an “off-beat sense of humor...,” and an amateur ornithologist to boot. This reminiscer recalls herself and her younger sister Alice accompanying Hermann as she walked along country roads, not far from Central Square, “observing birds” in the early morning hours. As to the private life of Miss Hermann, Dickinson Rich admits to knowing nothing, but strongly doubted there was anything untoward, writing: “For some reason or other, she was presumed by the mere fact of her occupation to be a Fast Woman. I don’t know why this should be so, unless it was because most milliners were single women, earning their living by pandering to the more frivolous instincts of their respectable sisters.”<sup>152</sup>

Hermann, whose parents lived in Middleboro, was at the start of a long career in Bridgewater, taking up residence at the Bridgewater Inn. For most of the year she managed the millinery shop alone, but in the month before Easter, the time in which the demand for hats was the most brisk, she hired help. In the spring and fall she went to Boston and New York to attend the millinery openings, sometimes with an assistant or perhaps in the company of other Bridgewater milliners. On her return, she would hold her own openings in the front room of the second floor of the Independent Block on the western side of Central Square. To accommodate Hermann’s growing enterprise, the owner of this building, Thomas W. Crocker, made some major improvements in the property in the summer of 1907, allowing her to move to the street floor, while retaining the second floor room as a work area, conveniently connected to the room below by a newly-built staircase. By September, new parlors, entirely refitted, provided a more elegant setting for Hermann’s fall and spring openings. While she did sell some ready-to-wear hats, she specialized in re-trimming old hats or creating new ones, always conscious of the latest styles and the current materials being used. Despite a busy work schedule during certain times of the year, Bridgewater’s leading milliner managed to enjoy some vacation time in the summer, going to such places as Deere Isle in Maine or Boston, where her sister L. W. lived at the Oxford Hotel. She also continued to play the role of an amateur ornithologist. Beginning in December of 1902, Hermann had to devote more time to family matters when her father, George H., was stricken with paralysis, leaving him an invalid. On October 20, 1910, she was called to Middleboro by his death. We will say more about Hermann in

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<sup>152</sup> Dickinson Rich, *Innocence under the Elms*, pp. 244-247; Moore, *Tales Around the Common*, p. 12; Goodnough, “Bridgewater Around 1910,” *HH*, p. 232; on rereading this paragraph, I can’t help thinking that research is needed about a good number of important twentieth century Bridgewater women.

future chapters since the major part of her career in Bridgewater still lay ahead.<sup>153</sup>

The ladies of Bridgewater were not limited to securing their hats from Hermann, despite her prominence in this service industry. Sarah E. Welch, who also lived in the Bridgewater Inn, continued her millinery business in the new brick addition to the Elwell Block on the eastern side of the Square until her death in 1905. Like the other milliners in town, she attended millinery openings in Boston, conducted her own in Bridgewater, and hired trimmers to do much of the work. On the other side of the Square, Miss T. A. Collier conducted a millinery business until 1907 in the Elwell building, no longer extant, situated between the Masonic Building and the so-called Tory House. She too went to millinery openings in Boston and New York and then held sessions in Bridgewater. To avoid competing with Hermann, her close neighbor in the Independent Block, Collier chose different days to inform the ladies of Bridgewater about latest styles in hat-making. From 1901 to 1907, Collier's head trimmer was Miss Flora E. Sherburne of Bridgewater, who joined Collier in moving to the Far West in the fall of 1907, where they planned to conduct a millinery business. Mrs. A. L. Clark and Miss Olive M. Cobb bought Collier's Bridgewater enterprise, announcing that their spring opening would feature "Stylish Millinery." Clark did not remain a partner very long, and by the end of the decade Cobb had become the enterprise's sole proprietor. In the spring of 1905, Mrs. Edna Wilbar of Boston moved her business from Centre Street to the store on Broad Street once occupied by G. M. Gifford, the tailor. This move further indicated this street's growing popularity as a business location. Wilbar not only sold trimmed hats, but also engaged in dressmaking. The story of millinery establishments will continue in succeeding chapters, but it is interesting to note that J. Kenneth Moore in Tales Around the Common writes: "In the early 1920's there were two millinery shops in Bridgewater. One owned by Miss Emma Herman[n] and the other by Miss Evelyn Cobb...", who, by the way, had taken over Olive Cobb's business.<sup>154</sup>

As the male population of Bridgewater reached almost five thousand by 1910 (keep in mind that perhaps a fifth of these were "residents" of the State Farm), it is not surprising to see an increase in barbering services. In 1901, William H. Reiser, Bridgewater's only barber for many years, was still

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<sup>153</sup> BI, April 5, Nov. 29, 1901, March 14, April 4, Aug. 8, 29, Sept. 26, Dec. 12, 1902, July 17, 1903, Feb. 3, June 2, Aug. 25, 1905, March 8, April 12, July 26, Sept. 13, 27, 1907, Dec. 10, 1909, Feb. 11, March 18, June 10, Sept. 9, Oct. 21, 1910.

<sup>154</sup> Plymouth County Atlas, 1903; BI, April 5, 1901, March 28, Sept. 26, Oct. 3, 1902, March 18, 25, July 8, Sept. 9, Nov. 11, 1904, April 7, 1905, Sept. 26, Nov. 16, 1906, May 17, Sept. 27, Oct. 25, 1907, March 27, 1908, March 8,

operating his shop in the Keith Block on the western side of the Square, where he had been located for over four decades. Evidently anticipating carrying on his business at least for a while longer, he had, it will be recalled, redecorated his shop in the previous year. In February of 1903, however, he succumbed to pneumonia at his home on Maple Avenue at the age of seventy-five, close to forty-eight years after arriving in the town. Having been born in Wurtemberg, Germany, Reiser was not in the “purest” sense a townnee, but in the course of so many years had become beloved, respected, and considered by some to be Bridgewater’s leading barber. He was an attendee of the New Jerusalem Church and one of the oldest members of the Fellowship Lodge of Masons. In recognition of his importance among the retailers of Central Square, all the stores were closed during his funeral service, held in Central Square Church, with Reverent Charles Edward Stowe officiating and John H. Fairbanks, Albert G. Boyden, Thomas W. Crocker, and John G. Braman serving as honorary bearers.<sup>155</sup>

If Reiser had passed away earlier in his career, the town might have been temporarily without a professional barber. But such was not the case in 1903. While Casey was no longer involved in this service business, Charles Bidmead, a native of England, who had been employed in Reiser’s shop for four years, had been conducting his own barbering service since the late 1890’s in the newly-built Odd Fellows Block. Between 1901 and 1903, his enterprise thrived, permitting him to install two state-of-the-art revolving and reclining chairs, labeled by one source as “the finest thing of the kind in town.” In September of 1903, Bidmead decided to rent the Keith Block quarters of his former employer, whose furnishings had been stored in H. P. Shaw’s barn in back of the Masonic building. After thorough renovations were made to accommodate his rapidly growing business, Bidmead opened up his new barber shop in October. Surprisingly, he only stayed there for about six months before deciding to take a vacation, after which he returned to his old home across the sea. Returning permanently to one’s native land was not an uncommon phenomenon among the millions of immigrants who came to America.<sup>156</sup>

Bidmead’s shop did not remain vacant long. On June 1, 1904, F. N. Lawrence of West Dennis on Cape Cod became the proprietor of this business next to the post office. By 1907, he was advertising that his four barbers made a “Specialty” of first-class work. Whether Hal Goodnough agreed or not with

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1910, Feb. 22, 1924; Moore, *Tales Around the Common*, p. 12.

<sup>155</sup> *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Volume II, p. 860; *Plymouth County Atlas*, 1903; *BI*, Feb. 27, Sept. 4, 1903, Feb. 22, 1924.

this assertion, he did recall in his reminiscences that he got his first hair cut at Nick Lawrence's Barber Shop. Even before Lawrence came to Bridgewater, J. J. Long was operating a barber shop on Main Street at Casey's old stand, evidently in conjunction with a boot black stand. He also employed four barbers who "naturally" gave "First-Class" haircuts and shaves. For those patrons with skin and scalp diseases, Long carried Gno! Ointment and also assured his customers that the razors used were "honed and concaved." In early 1908, he installed in his shop the Prokter Incandescent lights, which gave very bright light, allowing those males with a touch of vanity a better view of the hair creation that was in the making.<sup>157</sup>

Although information on them is limited, there were other barbers in town. Taylor's barber shop was repaired and painted in December of 1903, and Thaddeus King opened up a blacking stand in this shop in the spring of 1904. Tony Maraschino, who had worked for Lawrence, announced the opening of his shop on the corner of Main and High Streets in April of 1910. I suspect this business was connected to Sheehan's store before the fire in 1912 led to the moving of that variety store across the street to the corner of High and Centre Streets.<sup>158</sup>

Undoubtedly there was some competition among barbers between 1901 and 1910, but there was also co-operation. In the fall of 1909, for instance, the proprietors of all the shops agreed to close on Monday afternoon, something requested by the barbers and in line with the practice in the surrounding cities and larger towns. I suspect that prices-25 cents for a haircut and ten cents for a shave- were pretty standard in these early years of the century and that price "wars" were not waged among those in this business. During the next decade, the number of barber shops increase, so that by the early 1920's there were about a dozen such establishments in Bridgewater. But, as we have seen, the days when Reiser was the only barber in town were already over by the early 1900's.<sup>159</sup>

Mirroring the national trend, Bridgewater, as its population and economy expanded, witnessed the growth of insurance services from 1901 to 1910. Businesses and home owners were becoming more aware of the need for various kinds of insurance. In 1904, according to the Insurance Press, the leading

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<sup>156</sup> BI, Jan. 11, April 3, 1901, Sept. 4, 18, Oct. 16, 1903, May 20, 1904.

<sup>157</sup> BI, May 20, June 3, 17, July 22, 1904, July 5, Aug. 9, 1907, Feb. 14, 1908; Moore, Tales Around the Common, p. 10; Goodnough, "Bridgewater Around 1910," p. 232.

<sup>158</sup> BI, Dec. 25, 1903, April 8, 1904, April 8, 1910.

<sup>159</sup> BI, Oct. 15, 1909, Feb. 22, 1924.

trade paper devoted to this aspect of economic life, life insurance payments in the town in 1903 totaled \$13,500, most likely reflecting both an increase in policy holders and the amount of insurance carried by individuals. Also, more homeowners and businesses started to carry fire insurance, not only taking notice of the fire threat in a town where so many of the buildings were wooden , but perhaps aware that the National Board of Fire Underwriters, created in 1866, had made progress in bringing a degree of stability to this branch of the insurance industry. There were, nevertheless, complaints by some homeowners. In 1907, for instance, considerable discussion took place among some residents in the town's outlying districts concerning the difficulty of securing insurance on a house, especially if it was not occupied. It was hoped that the state legislature would soon pass ameliorative measures. By the end of the decade, property owners in these areas were surely aware that the inadequacies of the town's firefighting equipment and the limits of the water district could not help but have a negative impact on insurance rates. Liability and accident insurance coverage was also on the rise during these years, with the insurance agents in town quick to see the potential in advertising automobile insurance. This aspect of the business comes into its own mostly after 1910, however.<sup>160</sup>

Not yet describing itself as "Old and Reliable," Lewis G. Lowe & Son was Bridgewater's oldest and most prominent insurance agency. Lewis G. Lowe, its founder, had been one of the early trustees of the Bridgewater Savings Bank and during the 1870's and 1880's resided in the large house on the corner of South and Pleasant Streets, which is now the Bridgewater Nursing Home. Originally specializing in fire insurance, the company by the early 1900's could claim to be a "General Insurance" business, dealing in life, accident, travel, and, by the end of the decade, automobile insurance. At this time, the firm was run by Lowe's son Gustavus, who later would be associated with the Samuel B. Cholerton Insurance Company. With quarters in the Bank Building in Central Square and on Devonshire Street in Boston, Lowe and Son sold policies for Penn Mutual Life Insurance Co. of Philadelphia and the Middlesex Mutual Fire Insurance Co. of Concord, Massachusetts. These were good years for this Bridgewater firm, despite a brief moment of notoriety when it was made public that the brief demotion of the Bridgewater Post Office to third class status in 1904 was due to an "improper" swelling of its financial transactions when it sold to Gustavus J. Lowe a thousand dollars worth of stamps, which he used in his

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<sup>160</sup> BI, June 10, 1904, Nov, 19, 1907, Dec . 12, 1913.

# L. G. LOWE & SON

53 Devonshire Street, Boston.

Summer Street, Bridgewater

The Oldest Insurance Agency in this section.

Established more than half Century, and does a General Insurance Business in Fire, Burglar, Automobile, Live Stock, Plate Glass and all other risks. Standard Companies whose prompt adjustments and fair treatment are proverbial.



## FRANK HARLOW

BLACKSMITH and WHEELWRIGHT and  
HORSESHOEING and GENERAL JOBBING.

Special attention to Agricultural Machinery.

AGENT FOR THE W. EDDY PLOW CO.

Try my CORONA WOOL FAT for Sores on your Horses  
and Cattle. Money refunded if it does not do the work.

80 BROAD STREET, BRIDGEWATER, MASS.

## C. F. JORDAN

Plumbing and Heating,

General Repair, Sheet and

Metal Work.

CENTRAL SQ., BRIDGEWATER.



Boston office. The issue faded away the following year when the Bridgewater Post Office, without Lowe's stamp purchases, had over eight thousand dollars worth of business, the magic figure allowing it to regain its second-class status.<sup>161</sup>

From the late 1880's until his death in 1913, Thomas W. Crocker was another insurance agent on whom many in the town came to rely. Born in Barnstable on Cape Cod in 1832, he came to Bridgewater to manage a dry goods store established by William F. Brett on the western side of Central Square. Crocker later bought this business, which was important enough to be cited in Crane's 1884 history of the town. In the late 1880's, he decided to go into the insurance and real estate business. With the exception of supporting Theodore Roosevelt and the cause of the Progressive Party in 1912, Crocker was a staunch Republican, serving the town as a selectman, member of the Board of Health, and Representative in the General Court. He also was an auditor of the Plymouth County Agricultural Society for several years, a member of the Pioneer Lodge of Odd Fellows, and a substantial supporter of the Central Square Church. His daughter Rachel, who lived with her parents in their fine "Italianate frame vernacular style" house on Maple Avenue, became well-known in Bridgewater. For many years she was the children's librarian at the town's library, serving as an assistant to Lucia Christian, the head librarian. Had Thomas Crocker lived seven more years, he would have been proud to see his daughter become the first Bridgewater woman to vote in a national election (1920).<sup>162</sup>

Crocker's insurance and real estate business was located in the Independent Block, which the Plymouth County Atlas of 1903 credits him with owning. This building, situated immediately northeast of the older Masonic Block, also housed the Bridgewater Independent, Hermann's millinery shop, and a Chinese laundry business during the early 1900's. Crocker acted as an agent for The Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York and, aware of the increasing number of automobiles, became the "selling agent for the Junior Babcock Chemical fire extinguisher," which was "specially designed for fastening on to the running board" of this new form of motorized transportation. He died suddenly early in 1913 at the age of eighty-two from a heart attack in his Central Square office, having just returned from

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<sup>161</sup> BI, Feb. 22, 1901, March 7, 1902, March 18, 1904, April 7, 1905, June 15, 1906, March 22, 1907, Aug. 27, 1909, March 4, 1910; Crane, p. 807; Townscape Institute, Form 158, pp. 385-386; Bridgewater Book; "Lowe, Gustavus, 1852-1943--Businessman," HH, p. 271.

<sup>162</sup> BI, Feb. 14, Dec. 12, 1913, May 5, 1933; Crane, p. 796; "Crocker, Rachel, 1862 to 1935--Librarian," HH, pp. 50, 124, 261; Townscape Institute, Form 132, pp. 337-338.

a meeting of insurance agents in Boston.<sup>163</sup>

Another service/retail economic activity that was vital to Bridgewater was that dealing with coal, the fuel that, along with wood, heated most of the town's homes, schools, churches, and businesses. At the start of the new century, Sumner Keith was owner of Bridgewater's leading cold yard, which was located near the railroad station at the junction of Broad and Spring Streets. He had bought this yard from Henry T. Pratt in the early 1870's, and for many years it remained the town's only one. This was not the case in the early 1900's when Keith passed away and his son Edwin took over the business. The inhabitants of Bridgewater at this point had the option of getting coal delivered by other dealers.<sup>164</sup>

There was the Park Avenue Coal Yard, orders from which could be placed at Wilcox's Drug Store in Central Square. My knowledge of this company is limited at this point, and I can only surmise that it was owned in the early 1900's by H. A. Wilber, who also was in the ice business. In any case, the entire outfit was bought for over \$10,000 at auction on April 30, 1903, by L. W. Caryl of Palmer. He proceeded to move his family to Bridgewater, while Wilber moved to Worcester, Massachusetts, where he became engaged in the same type of business. In 1909, two years before the Keith yard would be taken over by new owners, the Bridgewater Ice and Coal Company was started by Frederick A. McNeeland and was located just east of the railroad tracks on Plymouth Street. Its ice came from Carver's Pond off of Summer Street. By early summer of the following year, McNeeland was urging "old" and potential patrons to place their coal orders early to take advantage of lower summer prices, and, at the same time, reminded all its customers that the company was "among the heavy taxpayers" in Bridgewater. This business, as subsequent chapters will show, would have a long history in town and by the later 1920's would start to sell and deliver oil, with motorized trucks taking over the delivery work once done by as many as twenty-two horses.<sup>165</sup>

In Crane's 1884 list of businessmen, there is no mention of plumbers or electricians in

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<sup>163</sup> BI, July 8, 1904, July 5, Aug. 9, 16, 1907, Jan. 21, March 4, May 6, July 8, 1910, Feb. 14, 1913; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Townscape Institute, Form 46, pp. 155-156; Bridgewater Book; it might be noted that the Independent Block was replaced in the early 2000's by a brick structure which includes apartments and might someday have a restaurant on the ground floor.

<sup>164</sup> BI, Dec. 22, 1911, Feb. 22, 1924; Crane, p. 796; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; see page 35 of the previous section for more on the background of the use of coal in Bridgewater.

<sup>165</sup> BI, Feb. 22, 1901, May 1, 1903, June 24, July 1, 1910, Feb. 22, 1924; "McNeeland, Frederick, 1877 to 1938--Merchant," HH, p. 272; David Moore, "McNeeland Inc.," HH, p. 90; I think Moore meant to say Frederick McNeeland in this last source; if my own experience in the 1940's in Fall River, twenty miles south of Bridgewater, gives a clue to earlier practices, I suspect that many inhabitants of Bridgewater in the early 1900's stored coke or coal

Bridgewater. As more and more people in the early 1900's began to rely on piped water, albeit under the control of a private company and, following a national trend, on electrical lighting and appliances, it was only natural that entrepreneurs and skilled workers were needed in these areas. While the businesses of Fairbanks and Rogers were engaged in plumbing to an extent, the creation of a new plumbing shop by Clarence M. Shaw was the important event in this service industry in the first decade of the twentieth century. After working for Fairbanks for many years, Shaw decided to go into business for himself. Leasing land in the rear of the Independent Block from Thomas W. Crocker, he proceeded to erect a structure twenty-five by forty feet in February of 1901. From the start, Shaw did a thriving business in standard plumbing, urging would-be patrons, among other things, to install in their homes a "snowy white, one-piece Porcelain Enameled Lavatory and have running hot and cold water as desired at your touch." Despite doing a brisk trade, Shaw, owing to poor health, decided in early 1911 to sell his establishment, including his stock, to Charles F. Jordan of Plymouth. Almost two years later, Shaw vacated his home on Maple Avenue and purchased a farm in Hopkinton, Massachusetts.<sup>166</sup>

As houses, churches, schools, and businesses switched to the use of electricity in the early 1900's and new structures were automatically wired for this relatively new source of power, electricians were increasingly in demand. Arthur R. Lyman, whose business was on Broad Street, advertised himself as an "Electric Light and Power Engineer," who was ready to repair or install the wiring for telephones, motors, door bells, fixtures, and electric lights. "Why not patronize home talent and save money," he rhetorically asked his would-be patrons. H. L. Jordan, also located on Broad Street, let the public know that he would "cheerfully" give estimates for wiring old and new structures and that the job would be "promptly done." Early in January 1911, Jordan formed a partnership with Howard E. Jackson and moved the business to rooms four and five in the new Estes Building, which, it might be recalled, had just become the new home for the stores of Casey and Burrill. At the same time, the Edison Electric Illumination Company moved its headquarters from the Elwell Block to this new Estes Block, but more about this later.<sup>167</sup>

By 1901, Charles H. King, a native of Vermont, had been operating his photography studio for

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for the winter months in bins located in the cellar.

<sup>166</sup> BI, Jan. 18, Feb. 1, 1901, July 22, 1904, Jan. 20, June 2, 1905, Feb. 10, 1911, Dec. 5, 1913; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Crane, p.796; Bridgewater Book.

about six years at 19 Central Square in the old Keith Block, located between the Bank Building and Odd Fellows Block. When he purchased the business of L. H. Harlow, it was not a profitable one, but thanks to hard work and “persistent advertising” it would have been difficult “to find a better appointed small town studio.” During 1903 and 1904, King made repairs and improvements in his establishment, including the additions of an awning over his show window, “a fine large skylight of ground glass, 14x10 feet,” and new floors throughout the studio. “Quiet and unassuming” himself, King specialized in group pictures and individual portraits, working especially well with children. He was the “official” photographer of graduating classes of the High School and the Normal School for many years. As Bridgewater’s leading photographer, he was concerned with keeping abreast with developments in his profession, attending, for instance, the New England Photographers Association meeting in Boston in August 1904. His role in the founding of the town’s Business Men’s Association in early 1906, indicated that King understood the need for co-operation among the town’s retail and service businesses.<sup>168</sup>

Another important service establishment in Bridgewater during the first decade of the twentieth century was the commercial printing business of Arthur H. Willis. By the late 1880’s, he was already well-known in the town as the proprietor and owner of a newspaper-fruit-confectionery store at Five Main Street, where his grandfather had operated a retail business. For a number of years, Willis was also in the employ of Henry T. Pratt, son of Dr. Calvin B. and Mary T. Pratt of School Street and the town’s leading printer of the late nineteenth century. When Pratt died in 1898, Willis purchased his mentor’s business, holding on to the goodwill of its patrons and continuing its operations in the small building behind the public library. Among other jobs, he gave “special attention to all kinds of Book, Commercial and Society Printing.” Following in Pratt’s footsteps, Willis also printed the Annual Reports of the Town of Bridgewater, made easier in late 1902 when he disposed of his Hoe cylinder and replaced it with a Cranston two-revolution cylinder press and in 1903 when he installed a larger Shipman engine. Around this time, Willis added to his busy life by beginning the publication of The Advertiser, thus giving the town two weekly newspapers. Despite some initial friction with the Bridgewater Independent, at the time under the editorship of Pliny Jewell, relations between Willis and James H. Dickinson, who

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<sup>167</sup> BI, Jan. 7, 1893, Dec. 10, 1909, Jan. 21, March 4, Dec. 30, 1910, Jan. 13, 1911; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>168</sup> BI, Jan. 7, 1893, Jan. 20, 1899, Feb. 22, 1901, March 20, 1903, Aug. 12, 1904; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; “Charles H. King, Bridgewater’s Up-To-Date Photographer,” Bridgewater Book; Crane, p. 796; Goodnough,

# The Bridgewater Advertiser

Devoted to the interests of  
Bridgewater People and  
Bridgewater Merchants.

Published Every Wednesday by  
**ARTHUR H. WILLIS, Printer,**  
20 MAIN ST., BRIDGEWATER.

We give special attention to all kinds of  
BOOK, COMMERCIAL and SOCIETY PRINTING.

Bridgewater Book

succeeded Jewell in 1905, were amiable and supportive. As the title of his newspaper implied, Willis was concerned with “boosting Bridgewater and Bridgewater merchants,” urging the town’s shoppers to “Trade at Home.” Indicative of his expanding business, he moved his printing operations in 1908 to his large building on Main Street. In addition to his own professional work, Willis played a role in Bridgewater’s Commercial Club, founded in 1901, by serving as its secretary during the tenure of its first president, John M. Stetson, and as a director of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank, established in 1902. Willis also found time to be an important leader in the New Jerusalem Church.<sup>169</sup>

By the time Willis began publishing the Advertiser, the Bridgewater Independent had been the town’s main source of news for over twenty-five years. (Consult footnote sixty-two for a short look at its history through 1899.) Suffice it to say here that by 1901 the Bridgewater Independent had been ensconced for three years in its quarters in the back part of the second floor of the Independent Block, which was immediately northeast of the Masonic building, and owned by Thomas Crocker. From 1901 to 1910, the Independent had two excellent editors-Pliny Jewell, until 1905, and then James H. Dickinson.<sup>170</sup>

At the start of his tenure in early 1901, Jewell announced some policy changes. They included the addition of editorial expressions, especially on important local issues, the printing of letters to the editor if they were signed (signatures were not necessarily published), and an increase in the coverage of local news. It was his hope that “in a short time all the towns lying properly within the Bridgewater district” would receive “their share of the news.” Reflecting a national trend, the Independent would not have survived without the ads of local merchants and service providers. By 1904, it continued to sell for only one dollar a year or for three cents a copy if purchased at Casey’s newsstand or Wilcox’s pharmacy.<sup>171</sup>

During the next four years, Jewell made progress in achieving his goals. Editorials on such local issues as electrical lighting for the town, town elections, the need for town sewerage, and the

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“Bridgewater about 1910, HH, p. 233; King died in the fall of 1921, at the age of fifty-four.

<sup>169</sup> BI, Sept. 4, Dec. 18, 1886, April 16, Oct. 29, Nov. 5, 26, 1887, Feb. 22, Dec. 13, 1901, Dec. 12, 1902, Jan. 23, 1903; Willis, “The Printer and the Bridgewater Advertiser,” Bridgewater Book; this last source has been most helpful to my research, but I continue to search for copies of the Advertiser, which I believe would help supplement some of the materials found in the Bridgewater Independent and The Bridgewater Book; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, pp. 269-270; Crane, p. 796; “Pratt, Henry Thomas, 1836-1898,--Newspaper publisher,” HH, p. 275.

<sup>170</sup> BI, Dec. 16, 1898, Jan. 20, 1899.

building of a new town hall, to mention only a few, were long, thoughtful, and well-written. But at times factual reporting and editorial stands were indiscriminately mixed. As a leader in the newly-formed Commercial Club, Jewell's editorials on town issues reflected the conservative Republican thinking of the majority of the town's economic, political, and civic leadership. Letters to the editor did appear, but not in such numbers as to make a special section necessary. On April 23, 1901, the Independent was able to boast that eighteen columns of "local news matter" appeared in the paper the previous week, which was "another record." Items about Scotland, Prattown, East Bridgewater, West Bridgewater, Elmwood, and North Middleboro began to increase. While news about the state, nation, and the world was included, it was seldom on the front page. The Jewell years of editorship were not devoid of controversy, whether over the challenge posed by appearance of a second town newspaper or the charge that the Brockton Times was printing "personals" found in the Bridgewater Independent and not giving due credit. In any case, Jewell decided "with regret" to sell the Independent, his valedictory appearing in the paper on September 29, 1905, the same issue which carried the "Salutatory" of James H. Dickinson, the new editor. As the former moved to Concord, Massachusetts, the latter made his way east to Bridgewater from Huntington, Massachusetts.<sup>172</sup>

Who would have thought that five years into the new century Dickinson was at the start of a career with the Bridgewater Independent that would last until the day he passed away, January 6, 1949? It would be tempting to look at his early years in Bridgewater from the vantage point of the late 1940's, by which time he had gained a degree of venerability in his professional field. But when he started at the Independent, he was not quite forty years of age with only limited experience in journalism as an employee of The Westfield Valley Echo in Western Massachusetts. When he decided to buy the Independent from Jewell, Dickinson knew his days of receiving a "regular pay check each week" were over and that hard work and skill would be needed to publish a local newspaper every week. He was aware too that he would have to supplement his income by doing nitty-gritty printing jobs to support his family. In his "Salutatory," he solicited "a continuance of the...printing patronage that has been given so

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<sup>171</sup> BI, Jan. 4, July 5, 1901, Oct. 24, 1903, May 6, 1904.

<sup>172</sup> BI, April 19, Aug. 2, 23, 1901, Sept. 29, 1905, Sept. 13, 1907; "Dickinson, James H., 1866 to 1949--Newspaper publisher," HH, pp. 261-262.

generously to our predecessor....”<sup>173</sup>

Many years later, in a beautifully-written and informative chapter in Innocence Under the Elms, Louise Dickinson Rich wrote of her father’s decision to go east and try his hand at editing the Bridgewater Independent: “Why did he do it? Because he wanted to be left alone to go his own pace. Because he wanted not only to think his own thoughts, but to express them without censorship; not only to hold his own opinions, but to declare them openly. Because he wanted nobody to tell him what to do or say or think except his own conscience and intelligence. Because he’d rather have less and be more. Because, in brief, he was a Dickinson.” (I cannot help mentioning that Louise Dickinson Rich informs her readers that Emily Dickinson, the reclusive, talented, and eccentric poet, was her “collateral relative.”)<sup>174</sup>

However lofty Dickinson’s hopes and ambitions were, his early years in Bridgewater could not have been easy. Picking up stakes and moving to a strange town with his wife, Florence, and two young daughters, Alice and Louise, must have created a sense of being uprooted, especially since buying a house was not a financial possibility. Instead, during their first decade in Bridgewater the Dickinsons lived in rented ones on Spring Hill Avenue, and School, Broad, and Dean Streets. All of these leased dwellings had their advantages and disadvantages, their charming and not so charming aspects. The one on the corner of School and Cedar Streets, for instance, had “a furnace ...hardwood floors and a fire place,” but was in “considerable disrepair” and lacked a bathroom. The family had to leave this so-called “Bates House” when it was moved to the corner of Bedford and Worcester Streets in 1913, to make room for the new Gammons Memorial Methodist Church. This disturbance to domestic tranquility must have been upsetting to the family, but most of James Dickinson’s time and energy, often with his wife at his side, had to be spent in establishing himself as the new editor and publisher of the Independent.<sup>175</sup>

At the start of his new position, Dickinson was listed as the Treasurer and Local Editor of the Bridgewater Independent, which was issued by the Plymouth County Publishing Co. Rather than presenting the details of his changing role in the newspaper’s organization through 1910, perhaps it would be best to use the words of his daughter Louise when she simply labeled her father “the owner-editor-publisher-printer of the little weekly” newspaper. In any case, hard work, the installation of

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<sup>173</sup> BI, Sept. 29, 1905, Jan. 13, 1949; “Dickinson, James H., 1866 to 1949--Newspaper publisher,” HH, pp. 261-262.

<sup>174</sup> Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 236.

<sup>175</sup> BI, Jan. 24, 1913; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 116, and chapter four, “Houses and Horses” in



“new machinery, including a fast newspaper press,” and numerous repairs to old machinery during 1906-1907 made it possible to meet the deadline of printing the paper every Thursday so that it would be ready for distribution by mail or at newsstands the following day. Like previous editors, Dickinson realized the overriding importance of seeking ads from the town’s commercial enterprises, promising “to assist all local merchants in improving their business.” The price of the paper was kept the same, but there were efforts to increase the readership. In late 1909, the boys and girls of the town were urged to bring in lists of new subscribers, not for “a barrel of money,” but at least for “a few pecks,” which, it was announced, would be twenty-five dollars, plus commission, to the young person who turned in the longest list. Contests, not a new approach for the Independent, also aimed at increasing the interests in the paper and, hopefully, its readership. Surely the citizens of Bridgewater followed with great anticipation the ups and downs of the voting that finally led to James Moore of Hooper’s general store being declared the “Most Popular Clerk in Town.” Those with an interest in the town’s history must have relished the articles submitted in a contest in 1910 (as did this historian) on such topics as the cotton gin factories, the brick-making establishments, and the hardware businesses of Fairbanks and Rogers.<sup>176</sup>

More will be said about the Bridgewater Independent in subsequent chapters, but it is pertinent to ask how it had fared in its early years under Dickinson’s editorship. Had the format and coverage of news greatly changed by the end of the decade? Was it different from the paper he had inherited from Pliny Jewell? Despite competition from Willis’s Advertiser, certainly the Independent was thriving in 1910, with “new subscriptions and very marked increase in sales at the news stands....” The February 4 issue, of which 2500 copies were printed, introduced a new form of sixteen instead of eight pages by reducing the page size in half, making the paper “more convenient to handle.” In the long tradition as a town paper, local news continued to dominate the Independent’s news coverage. In early 1907, this publication boasted of its “Fifty Town Reporters.” Given the space devoted to events and people in Prattown, the one covering this outlying area must have been among the more diligent. The long editorials on local issues, which some readers had enjoyed during the Jewell years, were not part of Dickinson’s paper in the years under discussion. Being new to Bridgewater, perhaps he was still learning

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general.

<sup>176</sup> BI, March 30, June 8, 1906, Feb. 22, Nov. 1, 1907, Dec. 17, 1909, Jan. 14, 28, Feb. 4, 1910; Dickinson Rich, “The Thursday Sticks and Stones,” Innocence Under the Elms, pp. 234-263; I recommend this last source for anyone

about town issues, or maybe it was a matter of adhering to policy stated on March 30, 1906: “We cannot serve the people at large unless we avoid special favor to any party, section creed, class, or interest.” However, Dickinson’s “pithy” editorials were praised by some and, on occasion, his views as a moderate Democrat, even in these early years, were evident. For instance, he took a more sympathetic stand on organized labor and working people in general than did some of the conservative Republicans who retained considerable political influence in the town.<sup>177</sup>

Whatever the joys, trials, or tribulations Dickinson experienced during these early years of his editorship of the Bridgewater Independent, his personal traits provided him with a good degree of equanimity to cope with vagaries of the job. His eldest daughter, Louise, best captured some of her father’s endearing ways when she wrote: “Our father was not a particularly imposing figure. He was rather a small man, with a low voice, a mild manner, and a habit of listening more than he talked.” Perhaps these traits account for his cordial relationship with Arthur Willis, editor of the competing Advertiser, who on December 15, 1910, “tendered the use of his office” for the printing of the Independent after fire had temporarily put its facility out of commission.<sup>178</sup>

If most citizens of Bridgewater in the early 1900’s were aware of the local newspapers, they also could not help noticing that the roofs of a good number of town’s houses and other buildings had been and were being covered by metal shingles. (Inhabitants and visitors a century later still remark on the number of “tin roofs,” and it might be interesting to see how many of them go back a hundred years or more.) In his reminiscences of the first quarter of the twentieth century, Arthur C. Lord, with more than a modicum of truth, credits Henry G. Prophett “for all the metal shingles in town.” The son of William and the brother of William S., both of whom were associated with thriving furniture and funeral businesses in Central Square, Henry was an equally well-known citizen of Bridgewater. By the late nineteenth century, he had become a prominent builder and real estate speculator. The large house on the corner of Bedford Street and Maple Avenue, diagonally across from where the Prophett’s Funeral Home is now located, was Henry G’s home for most of the first quarter of the twentieth century. It is a fine example of Queen Anne architecture, made unique by the “granite blocks and posts” which surround the

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interested in the intense labor of publishing a weekly town newspaper.

<sup>177</sup> BI, Sept. 29, 1905, March 30, April 6, 1906, Jan. 11, 1907, Jan. 14, 28, March 4, 1910.

<sup>178</sup> Dickinson Rich, Innocence under the Elms, pp. 236, 270; BI, Dec. 16, 1910.

property. Prophett was also the builder of several Italianate-style houses as well as more modest dwellings for workers, located on Bedford Street, just south of his home, and Maple Avenue and Union Street. Many inhabitants of the town engaged in a variety of activities in Central Square on any given day most likely kept track of the time by looking at the expensive electric clock on the steeple of Central Square Congregational Church. Perhaps fewer of them would have known that it was a gift from Henry G. Prophett, a church member, had he not mentioned this fact in some of his newspaper ads promoting his metal shingles.<sup>179</sup>

Starting in 1897, Prophett was known as an agent for the sale of “Walter’s Metallic Shingles,” described by David R. Moore (who is especially knowledgeable about the town’s industrial history) as “galvanized steel shingles, or ‘tin’ roofs, which have successfully lasted more than 100 years.” Among Prophett’s first customers was Joseph A. Bowman of School Street, whose house is currently owned by Thomas St. Thomas. By 1904, Prophett was averring in his ads that he “was not experimenting with these shingles” and in 1908 informed the people of Bridgewater and vicinity that he was “the sole agent” for this particular type of roofing. Several years later, one of his ads read: “I will GUARANTEE THESE SHINGLES to make a watertight and in every way a satisfactory roof, and I will stand back of every one I sell.” Many buyers also were lured by the promise that unlike wooden shingles the metals ones would show much more durability and, at the same time, offer “valuable fire protection.”<sup>180</sup>

Another service industry in Bridgewater was the painting business. Crane’s 1884 history of the town cites only two painters in his list of Business Men--John G. and Henry F. Braman. In 1898, Edward Brown of Broad Street was also advertising himself as a house, sign, and carriage painter, but by 1900 the Braman Brothers had become almost synonymous in Bridgewater with a variety of painting jobs, including house, carriage, and decorative painting. The days of this establishment were numbered, however. After fifty years in the painting business, the partnership came to end when Henry died early in the new century and his brother John, not caring to continue the enterprise, sold it to William C. Sutherland and Lawrence Etchell of Boston in March of 1902. John G. Braman, despite advancing years

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<sup>179</sup> “The Residency of Henry G. Prophett,” Bridgewater Book; Townscape Institute, Form 19, pp. 97-98, Form 20, pp. 99-100; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 97; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 17; Lord, “First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater,” Tales Around the Common, p. 47.

<sup>180</sup> BI, Feb. 19, March 11, 25, 1904, June 19, 1908, Oct. 20, 1911, Jan. 7, 1921, Feb. 23, 1923; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 97.

and failing health, continued to take an active interest in his adopted town, making daily visits to the reading room of Fellowship Lodge in the Masonic Building where he joined other members in discussing “the state of affairs.”<sup>181</sup>

Braman endorsed the new proprietors of the business, describing them as “capable young men and deserving of the patronage of the townspeople.” Sutherland, a native of Nova Scotia and who most likely had worked for Braman Brothers, became the working member of the partnership. Active in Masonic affairs, Sutherland, who resided on Plymouth Street in Bridgewater, soon became very popular in the town and surrounding area. He was not to have a long career in his chosen trade, however. On January 23, 1913, he passed away at the early age of forty-seven, leaving a wife and three children.<sup>182</sup>

About two years after Sutherland and Etchell took over the Braman establishment, Henry M. Leonard of Laurel Street leased a vacant store next to the Broad Street Market and established H. M. Leonard & Co. More research on this business is needed, but in 1904 the firm indicated that it would carry “wall paper, paints, oils, varnishes and brushes.” And by using the words “Your Painter-Your Paperhanger,” its ads seemed to imply that the company actually did the work as well as selling the necessary supplies. To create some excitement about his new enterprise, Leonard conducted a guessing contest in July, with its promise of sending the winner to the World’s Fair in St. Louis. This writer has no idea who the lucky winner was or how many new patrons frequented Leonard’s store.<sup>183</sup>

On a more somber note, we need to discuss briefly the two undertaking establishments in Bridgewater. Following a national trend, this service industry was becoming professionalized (the nomenclatures mortician and funeral director were increasingly used) as more people relied on “experts” to attend “to everything in this line...;” holding wakes in the family’s front parlor and funeral services in church were still common practices, however. William Prophett had conducted both furniture and undertaking businesses in Central Square starting in the 1860’s, and after his death in 1897 his son William S., in partnership with John E. Flynn continued them. One account described this undertaking service as “first-class,” which takes “full charge of all the arrangements of the funeral, and leaves nothing undone that would be satisfactory to bereaved families and friends....” The Prophett-Flynn funeral

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<sup>181</sup> BI, Feb. 18, 1898, Aug. 16, 1901, March 21, 28, Aug. 22, 1902, July 9, 1909, Jan. 5, 1912, Feb. 22, 1924; Bridgewater Book; Townscape Institute, Form 48, pp. 159-160.

<sup>182</sup> BI, March 21, 1902, Jan. 24, 1913.

business became even more professional in 1906 when William P. Prophet, a graduate of Massachusetts College of Embalming, joined his father and Flynn in the partnership. While the stately black horses used to pull the funeral hearse continued to attract public attention, it would not be long before automobiles became “a popular factor in the business,” including a Cunningham motor hearse.<sup>184</sup>

By the early 1900’s, Prophet and Flynn were not the only undertakers in Bridgewater. In 1904, James F. Charnock was advertising himself as an “Undertaker and Embalmer,” with quarters on Main Street in the Willis Building, just a short walk from A. I. Simmons. F. A. McNeeland (presumably Frederick McNeeland, who in 1909 founded the Bridgewater Ice and Coal Co.) served as Charnock’s assistant. Not long after this funeral business opened, the Massachusetts General Court passed legislation requiring any embalmer with less than three years of experience to pass an examination. Unlike “a good many” who decided not “to go through the ordeal,” Charnock passed the test and by early 1906 was fully licensed by the State Board of Registration in Embalming to practice in Massachusetts.<sup>185</sup>

If there was no plethora of undertaking establishments in Bridgewater in the first decade of the twentieth century, the same could be said for restaurants, especially from the vantage point of later in the century when eating out would become a national pastime. The Bridgewater Inn, which we have already discussed, appears to have been the only place in the early 1900’s where it was possible, except at home, to entertain friends at a leisurely dinner, and even at proprietor Alcott’s table no glass of wine enhanced the “cuisine” of the evening. Hopefully, the many suppers served at churches, fraternal meetings, and gatherings of a host of other civic organizations helped brighten the lives of those in town who tired of the fare prepared at home. For the more adventurous souls who had the economic wherewithal and the means of transportation, some of the larger cities such as Taunton, Brockton, and Boston provided greater culinary delights. Most likely, however, most of the people in Bridgewater had to be satisfied with visits to the ice cream parlors or to the two lunch places in their own town.

The Owl Lunch on Broad Street, owned and run by several proprietors between 1901 and 1910,

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<sup>183</sup> BI, Feb. 5, March 18, July 8, 22, 1904.

<sup>184</sup> BI, Jan. 20, 1899, July 4, Oct. 3, 1913; Bridgewater Book; Townscape Institute, Form 54, pp. 174-176; “Prophet, William, 1834 to 1897--Merchant, funeral director,” HH, pp. 275-276; “Prophet, William Spiers, 1858 to 1932--Funeral director,” HH, p. 276; “Flynn, John E., 1866 to 1955--Funeral director,” HH, pp. 263-264; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 14; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 55; Moore, Tales Around the Common, p. 9; David R. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 78.

<sup>185</sup> BI, May 27, 1904, Jan. 5, 1905, Jan. 6, June 1, 15, Dec. 21, 1906.

was the oldest and most popular lunch room at this time. After Joseph H. Sanford's proprietorship in the very early 1900's, it was bought by Lester Charnock of Spring Street in April of 1905, with the help of his brother, James F., who had recently started his undertaking business. In the fall of 1906, Owl Lunch changed hands again, coming under the management of M. A. Simmons. He renovated the premise and opened at six-thirty for breakfast and, living up to its name, Owl's did not close until midnight. (Is there any place at present in Bridgewater where one can even get a snack at this hour?) Alas, by the summer of 1910, the establishment was again sold, this time to Warren Lamb of Stetson Street. As a former conductor on the street railroad, he had the advantage of a "wide acquaintance" and vowed to devote all his energies and time to personally overseeing the newly acquired business, hoping "for a continuance of the liberal patronage" the place had "always enjoyed." Some of the newspaper ads began to read "Lamb's Quick Lunch," but the picture of an "owl" was placed between the last two words of the title. The food was reportedly "well-cooked and tasty," with "Home Made Pies" a specialty. With its "First Class and Quick Service," it was no wonder that this lunch room, not far from the corner of Broad and Summer Streets, was a popular eating place for shoppers and store workers in Central Square and those who were employed in the nearby mills such as McElwain's shoe factory on Perkins Street.<sup>186</sup>

Bridgewater's other lunch room was located on the western side of Central Square in Elwell's property between the Tory House and the Masonic Block. (Less imposing than its two neighbors, this structure was demolished in March of 1976, less than a decade after the old Masonic building met the same fate.) Only a tentative picture of this eating establishment has emerged from my limited research. It appears that in the very early 1900's, Lawrence Costa continued to conduct his fruit business in one of the street floor sections of Elwell's building. When he decided to move his enterprise to Broad Street, Norman and Charles Fisher moved into Costa's old space, where they not only sold fruit but also added a lunch counter. Then, in July of 1904, A. D. Atkinson of South Braintree bought Fisher Bros., and, after making a number of improvements in the store, announced his hopes for conducting a "first-class lunch room," as well as selling fruit, confectionery, cigars, tobacco and stationery. It was at this juncture, I believe, that this "restaurant" became known as the Central Square Lunch. Like its competitor, The Owl Lunch, Atkinson's also opened at 6 a.m., but in a more genteel fashion closed at 11 p.m. Perhaps its

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<sup>186</sup> BI, April 26, June 7, July 5, 1901, June 3, 1904, April 14, 1905, Nov. 16, 1906, Aug. 19, 1910, Sept. 4, 1914;

location near the trolley terminals in Central Square was a boon to this business, and, who knows, maybe some ladies stopped in for a bite to eat or a cup of tea after making arrangements to have a new hat made in Olive M. Cobb's millinery rooms, located in the same building. At any rate, both establishments must have been pleased when new cement steps were built in front of their establishments in 1911. One last conjecture-sometime around 1915 the Exchange Café replaced the Central Square Lunch, but more about this later.<sup>187</sup>

For some women, the small number of commercial laundries in the early 1900's were among the more welcomed services in Bridgewater. At a time when the family washing was a drudging task done by hand, usually on a Monday, Schelde's ad urging patrons to "Leave Your Bundles with Us" must have been read with a sense of relief by a number of his female customers. Unlike Schelde's, however, which simply served as an agent for the White Star Laundry in Brockton, laundering was done on the premises of several Bridgewater businesses, conveniently located in Central Square or on Broad Street. Perhaps the propinquity of the town's two lunch rooms to the laundry establishments allowed their patrons to enjoy a bite to eat before dropping off or picking up their bundles of family's laundry.<sup>188</sup>

Two of the Bridgewater laundries in 1907 were operated by Chinese immigrants, a part of the town's population that could be counted on less than two hands at the time. Located on the street floor of the Independent Block on the western side of Central Square, the Central Square Laundry was started in 1898 by Samuel and George Lee, who promised to do "the best work this side of Boston," all "by hand" and without the use of "chemicals." The proprietors further pledged to keep prices low and to give their patrons a sample box of imported Chinese tea. After running this small but apparently prosperous commercial endeavor for nine years, it was announced in the Independent on June 7, 1907, that the Lees were leaving their business, perhaps causing some momentary consternation among its patrons as to who would now wash and iron their linens and clothes, and, when the need arose, replace buttons. Fortunately for those who had come to rely on the Central Square Laundry, Lee Ming & Co. of Boston bought it. Charlie Lee, who had arrived in San Francisco from China as young man and reportedly was "very much Americanized," became the new proprietor. Around 1911, he visited China, leaving the

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Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 87; Bridgewater Book.

<sup>187</sup> BI, July 20, 1900, July 29, Nov. 11, 1904, Oct. 27, 1911, March 25, 1976; Atlas of Plymouth County, 1903; Bridgewater Book.

business in charge of a nephew. Three years later, Lee died of pneumonia in Boston. I know little about the other Chinese laundry on Broad Street and its connection to the earlier ones established on the same street in the 1890's, except that it also changed had a change of ownership in 1907. (It could be that the new proprietor was Harry Hong before he became associated with the laundry in Central Square around 1913.)<sup>189</sup>

In 1907, Foster J. Rand, who moved to Bridgewater from Whitman, established the Acme Wet Wash Laundry on Broad Street. With the help of his three sons Roland, Percy and Lloyd, Rand's wet wash laundry prospered, evidently by convincing enough women of the town to forego "The Most Trying Work" of the week by paying fifty cents to have the family's laundry picked up, washed, and delivered. After being in business for only four years in Bridgewater, the "Messrs Rand" purchased a lot on Crapo Street in anticipation of erecting a new building for their business.<sup>190</sup>

Another important service industry involved the delivery of packages from Boston and other places to the homes of Bridgewater inhabitants. Although not the first to run such a business, Joseph A. Bowman, with the help of Charles Burrill, was the leading figure in this commercial endeavor between 1878 and 1910. At this point in my research I am not sure of Bowman's connections, if any, with the earlier express company run by Ezra Alden. Crane's 1884 list of Bridgewater businessmen, however, cites only Bowman as an expressman. A member of the Expressmen's League, he maintained offices in Boston and Bridgewater, sharing with Cole's Drug Store that part of the Kingman building facing Central Square. The operations of Bowman's Express were fairly straight forward with packages from Boston reaching Bridgewater via the railroad and then being delivered by horse-drawn wagons to the designated addresses in the town, hopefully the same day. The business prospered, and in the 1890's Bowman bought the substantial house at 21 School Street, which had been owned by Reverend Theodore F. Wright, pastor of the New Jerusalem Church between 1869 and 1889 and a leading force in the building of the Memorial Library. While Bowman's company continued to flourish in the first decade of the twentieth century, competition and, perhaps, early signs of poor health most likely figured in his decision

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<sup>188</sup> See previous comments about Schelde's, pp. 18, 61-62.

<sup>189</sup> BI, June 7, 1907, Oct. 31, 1913, May 8, 1914; United States Census, 1900, Part I, p. 620; Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. I, p. 335; Hal Goodnough, "Bridgewater Around 1910," HH, p. 232; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 243; Tales Around the Common, p. 10; my readers might wish to see the comments on the Chinese laundries in Bridgewater in the 1890's on pages 40-41.



to retire in 1913, after thirty-five years in the express business. As we shall see in the next chapter, the new owners will continue to use the Bowman name.<sup>191</sup>

There were three other components of the express service in Bridgewater between 1905 and 1910, all of which are discussed at some length in other sections of my work. The Old Colony Street Railroad Company gained the right in September of 1906 to deliver express packages and freight to Bridgewater, where wagons would then make the deliveries to the final destinations in the town. There were problems, especially related to traffic in Central Square, caused by this new mode of express service, but some in the town thought it a desirable link “with the outside world.” A further change came in 1910 when the Adams Express Company started a Bridgewater branch of its almost seventy-five year old business. After a short stay on Hale Street, where it was conveniently located near the railroad, the company moved its office to 39 Broad Street. For the first three years of its operations in this town, William J. Smith served as the local manager. While more will be said about this outfit in subsequent discussions, it appears that from the start its delivery area was more extensive than Bowman’s and included communities some distance from Bridgewater. Finally, in the early years of the new century Bridgewater, like other American communities, began to reap the benefits of the establishment by the federal government of parcel post.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> BI, June 2, Aug. 4, 11, 18, 1911.

<sup>191</sup> BI, July 17, 1903, July 6, 1906, Jan. 6, 1911, May 24, 1912, Jan. 25, Oct. 3, 1913, Feb. 22, 1924; Townscape Institute, Form 197, pp. 464-465; Plymouth County Atlas, 1903; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 16, 1994, p. 74; Bridgewater Book; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 34, 65; Crane, p. 796.

<sup>192</sup> BI, Oct. 7, Nov. 25, 1910, Jan. 10, 1913, June 5, 1914.

### **About the Author**

Benjamin A. Spence, a native of Fall River, Massachusetts, a city about twenty miles south of Bridgewater, began his education in the public schools of that community. He attended Bridgewater State College between 1955 and 1959, earning his undergraduate degree in secondary education and history. After teaching social studies at the junior-senior high school level in Somerset, Massachusetts, for two years, he went on to receive his MS, 1962, and PhD, 1971, in history from the University of Wisconsin. Almost all of Dr. Spence's teaching career was spent at Bridgewater State. Following his retirement in 1995, he began to do historical research on the Town of Bridgewater, concentrating mainly on the first quarter of the twentieth century, a period of American history in which he specialized.